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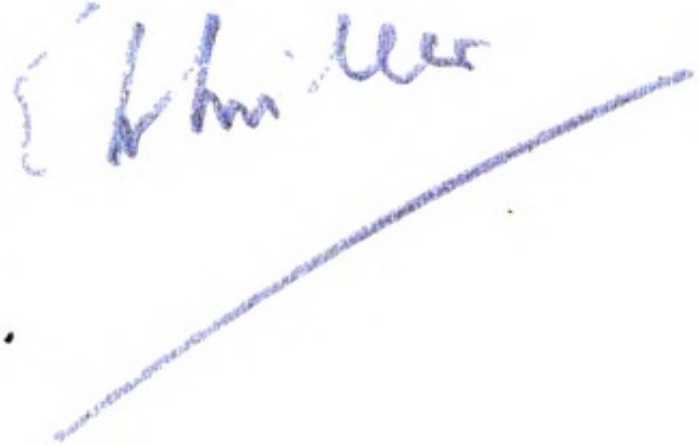

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A YEAR ON THE IRRAWADDY.

BY

E. M. P-B.

With 8 Illustrations.

Price Rs. 3-8.

RANGOON.
MYLES STANDISH Co., LTD.
1911.

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To
"Sally Brown" and "Dinah Shadd,"
those being the names which
irreverent relatives
have bestowed on my two little daughters
Cicely and Diana.

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PREFACE.

A FEW words of explanation seem to be necessary.

In the first place I wish to disclaim any attempt to write a book either on "Burma" or on "The River Irrawaddy." I have still enough diffidence left to know that such subjects are entirely beyond my powers, and I should not have thought it needful to point this out but that certain floating rumours, indicating an entirely mistaken conception of my aim, have reached my ears.

I have written, not of the "river," but of my experience of the river—which is a very different thing; and that rather meagre experience was gained during about eighteen months spent on board an oil-steamer of which my husband was in command.

But I am only too conscious of my presumption in tackling even such a subject when I reflect that there are men still in Burma whose acquaintance with the river extends to as many years as mine does to months, and whose reminiscences would completely overshadow mine if only they had leisure (which unfortunately they have not) to record them.

It is their criticism I most dread.

They will see at once that my account is not chronologically accurate.

That one objection, however, I am able to meet. As a matter of fact, though writing of only one year on the river I have included the happenings of three or

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four years within that space of time, keeping, as far as possible, each event to the particular month or season in which it happened.

The same process of condensation has been applied occasionally in the case of persons and ships,—three successive Chief Engineers for instance, being resolved into one Chief Engineer, three or more definite ships becoming—but this very rarely—one composite and rather hazy vessel.

Moreover, I have had to rely almost entirely on a not infallible memory. I kept no diary during my short term afloat as I had no intention of publishing an account of my adventures.

Like Topsy the book "growed." There was no definite and purposeful beginning, and the separate chapters were not written in the order in which they now appear. They were first evolved as random articles, short and self-contained, the penning of which formed the pleasant occupation of solitary firelit evenings during a winter in England.

Much remodelling has been necessary to make them hang together in passable sequence, and the performance of the task has produced at least *one* useful result in giving me a very clear knowledge of my own limitations.

I am aware that the book will not be of general interest, but if it serves to give a few of 'the home-folk' some faint idea of what life on the river is like I shall count that success.

Another point needs apology. In writing of recent events and living people it has been necessary at times to make direct references to individuals, but I have tried, in most cases, to keep them as vague as possible.

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I sincerely hope that those who find themselves mentioned in these pages will not be offended thereat.

The very many mistakes in punctuation etc., that appear on nearly every page, especially at the beginning of the book, are partly due to a misapprehension on my part. I did not understand at first, that the type was set up by natives of India who were totally ignorant of the English language, and I fondly imagined that (after correcting the ordinary and most glaring errors) such minor details as the insertion or deletion of commas might be left to the compositor.

I am afraid that I am responsible too, for the faulty spelling still remaining. Some of it, I admit, is owing to a hasty revision of the final proofs in order to expedite the production of the book.

Still, there was an enormous amount of error in the first proofs entailing very considerable labour in correction, and at each subsequent revision, if different spacing or arrangement were required, a fresh outcrop would appear.

Then at the balance, pray be mute—
The error oft repeated—
What's left you partly may compute
But know not what's deleted.

In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to all who have offered help, encouragement, or advice.

I am very greatly indebted to Mr. Klier, (Rangoon) Mr. Francis, (Myanoung) and Mr. A. R. Gardner, (Prome) who have most kindly supplied the photographs which appear as illustrations.

My thanks are also due to "the Skipper" for his painstaking explanation of all matters connected with the ship during our life on board, and for his patient

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revision of the manuscript and correction of many technical errors.

My worst crime I believe consisted in calling a "paddle-box" a "wheel house," but it is just possible that the glare of publicity may reveal other undetected sins, and for those, (and all others), I humbly crave anticipatory pardon.

E. M. P-B.,
RANGOON,
March 1911.

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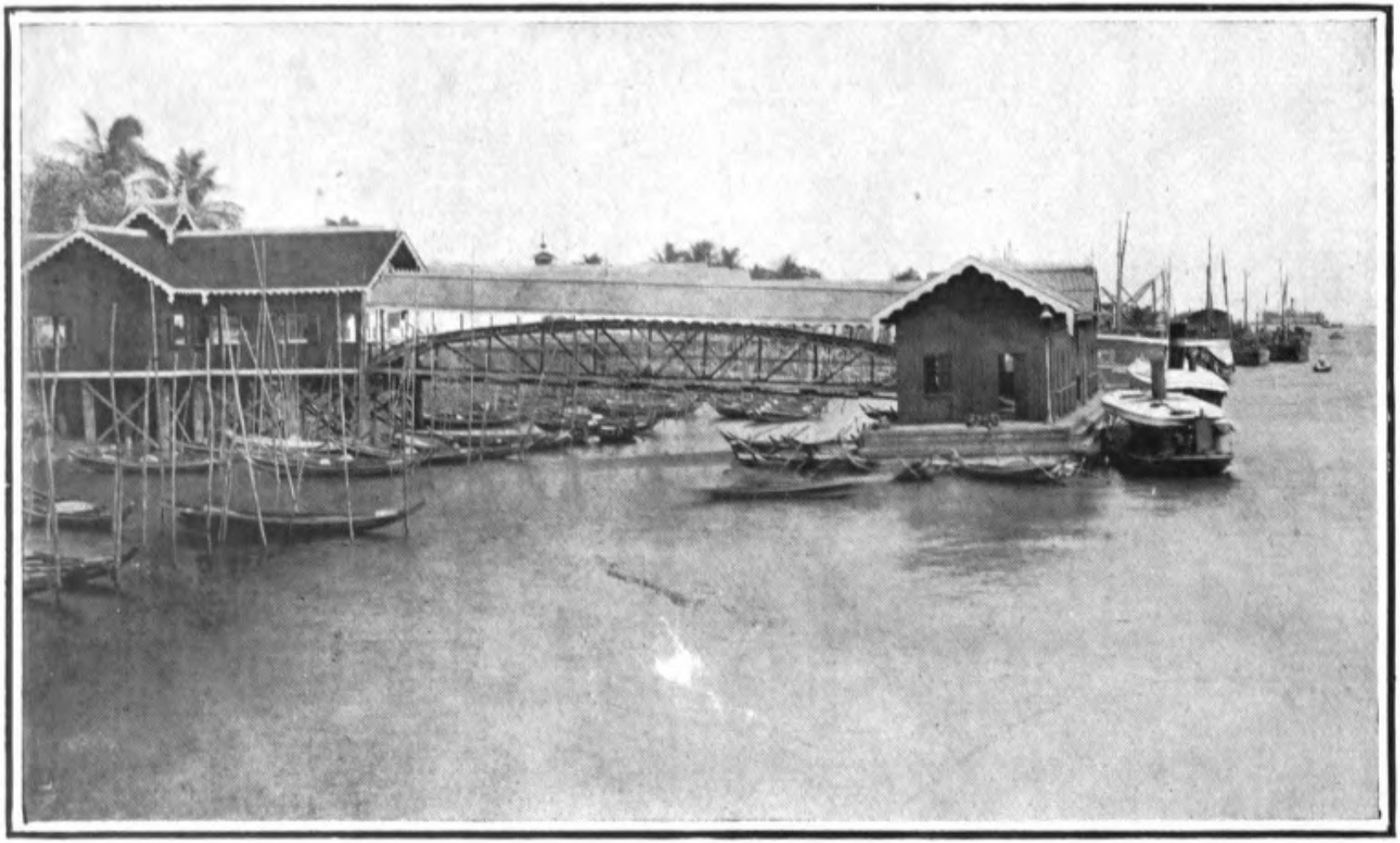

Photo by Francis, Myanoung.

Barr Street Jetty.

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A YEAR ON THE IRRAWADDY

PART. I.

A TYPICAL TRIP.

CHAPTER I.

RANGOON HARBOUR.

It is the close of a hot day in February when we go aboard the "Munepoor." She is lying moored at the Hastings beyond the limits of the Rangoon Harbour, and we are fortunate enough to get a passage in a steam launch from Barr Street Jetty instead of having to undertake the rather perilous crossing in a sampan. The tide is running out like a mill race, and had we journeyed in a sampan, and *had* we fouled a buoy or the cable of a ship lying at anchor—a not unlikely thing to happen—this would never have been written because, so broad and deep is the river, so swift and strong the current, there is little chance of rescue for anyone who is capsized in the stream. In fact, few Europeans patronise a sampan when any other craft is available.

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However, we arrive safely on board, and, a perfunctory dinner over, go forward to enjoy the breeze and escape from the mosquitoes in the saloon. It is still early but darkness has fallen, and the night is pleasantly cool. Lying back in long chairs we survey the lights of Rangoon harbour, lights that are meaningless at first to me until the Skipper points them out with words of description and explanation. The deep-sea ships, representative of nearly every civilised nation, lie in long parallel lines down the harbour tugging at the buoys at which they swing. Ahead of us is a pilot brig which has seen better days, and further on a large sailing-vessel, its towering masts and yards with close-furled sails just visible through the gloom. Close by the pilot brig is a green buoy which marks the wreck of a vessel which was originally named the "Clive." She was at one time a Calcutta tug but was superseded by finer vessels. A company of Chinaman bought her and brought her to Rangoon for the purpose of trading between Rangoon and Penang. Arrived here it was discovered that her boilers were useless and

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as the hull was not worth the expense of new boilers she lay idle for years opposite Dalla. About the time of the war between Russia and Japan an enterprising Frenchman bought her, re-named her the "Orange" and fitted her up regardless of expense, ostensibly as a private yacht. But—so the story goes—she was really purchased on behalf of the Russian government to take out stores and despatches from French Siam and Cochin China to the Russian Fleet. The war, however, came to an end before her services were needed and as there was no further use for her she was conveniently lost. One day she prepared to leave the harbour, but, " owing to some unfortunate mistake," she was cast off from the buoy without steam on the engines. Consequently while drifting down at the mercy of the current she fell across the bows of an inward bound " Asiatic " boat which did the only thing possible to prevent her sinking inside the harbour by running her on to the bank at the B. B. T. C. Ltd. timber yard. There she lies still, working her way deeper and deeper into the sand, and all that can be seen of her at high water is the green buoy

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floating on the waves near the old pilot brig.

So I have heard, but I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the story. I mention it here to show how interesting an ordinary buoy or a mast head light may become when once its story is known. Each light shining steadily through the purple darkness is fraught with mystery. Who knows what adventures have befallen these quiet ships on their hitherward voyage and what fate has in store for them when they put out on the wide seas again?

The night is full of sound: the water lapping on our bows, the clank of the chain as the ship swings to the breeze, occasional trumpetings from elephants in the timber-yard to our left and shrill hootings from bustling little steam launches threading their way between the larger vessels. The creaking of a sampan grows nearer and louder, then the plash of oars is heard and the bumping and the grating at the foot of the ladder followed by voluble native chatter as a returning Kalassi haggles over the fare with the sampan-wallah.

The sound of a bugle comes faintly and

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musically across the water from the homeward-bound Bibby boat laden with passengers escaping from the heat and fevers of Burma to the cool English springtime. Some are tourists returning after a pleasant cold weather holiday; but most of the passengers—we had seen them embarking—are jaded "Anglo-Indian wrecks" with pallid faces and staring eyes, the women waxen white of hue, the men either yellow or ashen grey. Two passengers had been carried on board too ill to walk, and one of them, we afterwards heard, gave up the struggle before the voyage was half over and disembarked—in a weighted sack—in the middle of the Red Sea.

It grows quieter on the river now, fewer launches and sampans are at work, and the night is chilly. A loom of light hangs over the City of Rangoon but there is deep darkness on the hill of the Shwe Dagon.

> "Where the Great Temple stands aloft to see
> The waves dance down from Mandalay for ever."

Occasionally, far away to the West, the reflection of a searchlight flickers across the sky, while nearer at hand a deep-toned

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boom sounding at intervals heralds the approach of one of the "old Flottila" punching her way up to Lammadaw Jetty against the last of the ebb.

"Some poor devil hard at work!" says the Skipper, "Let's turn in."

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CHAPTER II.

Departure from Rangoon.

Life on board an oil-boat is a solitary existence. Owing to the dangerous nature of the cargo, no passengers are carried and Government regulations prohibit the vessels from lying alongside any ghat or landing stage, so they are compelled to lie out in mid stream every night well clear of any other shipping. Consequently it is a tedious matter to go ashore or visit other vessels, as the strong current, especially in the high water season, makes it a difficult matter for the men to keep the heavy cutter on its course. The Captain's gig, a smaller and lighter boat is kept hoisted in the davits after leaving Rangoon.

With oil-flats in tow no vessel is allowed to enter the limits of Rangoon harbour and unless there is other cargo to be taken up to one of the jetties, the oil boat is moored during its brief stay in Rangoon at the Hastings, about two miles away from the city on the opposite side of the river.

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All this goes to explain that the Skipper and I are almost totally dependent on each other for society and that though we spend month after month travelling up and down the river we seldom come into close contact with the Burmese, or any people, apart from those on the ship, and have few opportunities of visiting the towns, pagodas and lovely little bits of scenery we see along the banks. Other people have passed up the river and written of the beauty and charm of the country and its people; but this I do not attempt to do. I have learnt to look at everything from the navigator's point of view. I know the awkward places in the river, the eccentricities of the crew, the trials and difficulties of the Commander and the various "tempers" of different vessels; but, as regards the scenery and other points of interest I can only appreciate silently what others have so aptly described.

One trip on a oil-boat is very much like another, varying slightly with the seasons of the year, but that is all. It would be wearisome to give details of each. Let the first one be typical of all others.

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Work begins at dawn next morning. One of our empty flats is made fast at a buoy near by and has to be brought alongside. A line is dropped down and made fast and then, with much shouting, swearing and shrieking from the Serang the huge, iron hulk nearly as long as the vessel herself is hove into position and made fast for towing. Shortly afterwards the Tug "Salween"—looking uncommonly like a frail little woman leading home a burly drunken husband—comes panting up from the Pegu River with the other flat in tow.

At length all is ready for departure, but no!,—the saloon boy rushes up to say that the butler has not yet arrived on board with the stores. The Skipper has still half an hour to spare so he receives the announcement calmly. But time passes on, he becomes fidgety; he becomes annoyed; he becomes exasperated; he becomes desperate. He alternates between the whistle-lanyard and the telescope. If that rascally fellow does not come soon he has either to leave Rangoon with no food on board or to miss the tide at the Bassein Creek and so lose a day. He paces up and down the for'ard deck

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and reviles in turn the ruinous messing system and the whole Madrassi race with special reference to the galley-staff and pointed emphasis on this butler in particular. Again he drags at the whistle-lanyard; again he raises the telescope and scans the different jetties on the opposite bank; Botatoung Lewis Street, Sparks Street—is he there.? At last he comes to view in a distant sampan seated imperturbably nursing a stack of cabbages, with joints of meat, tins of milk, bottles of soda-water and various other provisions piled in confusion around him. The sampan, looking rather like a two-legged spider, crawls across the river and eventually reaches the ship.

"*Stand by*!" roars the Skipper. He has no time to talk to the delinquent now and no doubt the wily one knew this. "It is better to be a lot late than a little late" thinks he, because the Captain Sahib's anger has time to cool somewhat before the inevitable interview takes place.

The last few fathoms of chain are rattled in and the Serang signals that the anchor is 'a-trip," the secunnie is at the wheel and purriwallah at the telegraph. There are

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two men at the wheel of each flat watching and waiting for orders.

"*Easy ahead*" says the Skipper.

"*Easy er-red Sahib*" echoes the purriwallah as he rings the telegraph. The huge paddle wheels turn slowly and begin to churn up the water.

"*Half speed*" rings out and

"*Arf is-speed Sahib*" follows. The engines respond to the message.

"*Full speed*" and away we go leaving a yellow wake of water behind us as we turn and swing into the channel.

A pleasant breeze from the sea meets us as we glide past Monkey Point and Liffey Island—past the batteries where the guns are so cunningly painted with vari-coloured stripes that they are scarcely distinguishable to the unpractised eye and past the new oil refinery works which have sprung up with mushroom growth on the left bank of the river. Further on we meet a sturdy little steamer rushing by, every line of her indicating speed and power. She is the S. S. "Lunka" from Calcutta carrying the English Mails and several overland route passengers to Rangoon. Of other inward-bound craft

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there are few just now and as there is "nothing to do but keep in the water," according to the Skipper, and as the secunnie can be trusted to do that, the opportunity is seized for a hasty meal before the nerve-trying ordeal of four hours in the Bassein Creek.

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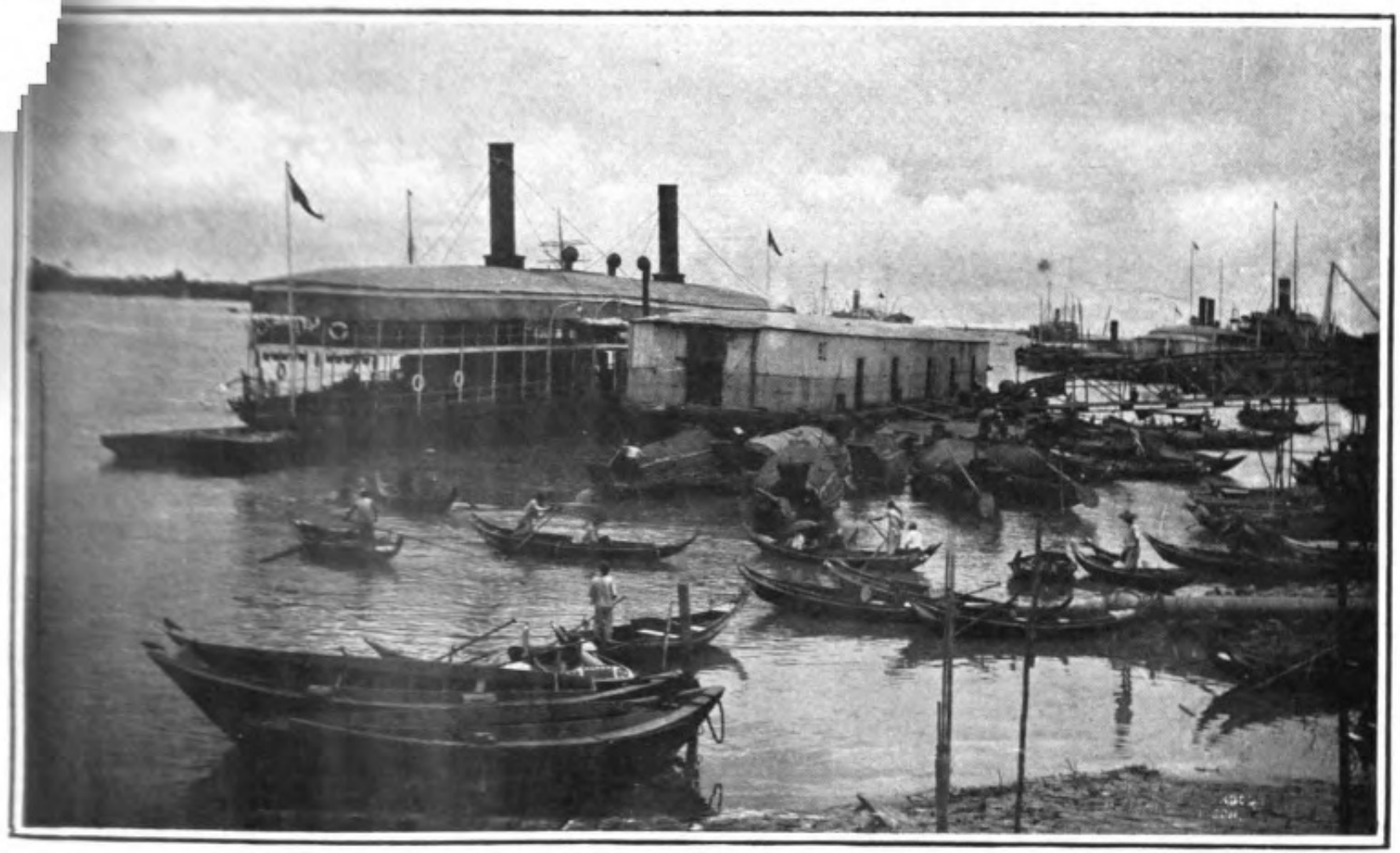

Photo by Klier, Rangoon.

Steamer and Flat, Rangoon Harbour.

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CHAPTER III.

The Bassein Creek.

The Bassein Creek is so called because it is nowhere near Bassein. It is a channel connecting the Rangoon River with another of the delta streams, so affording a means of communication with the main Irrawaddy without the necessity of putting out to sea. It is a cross between the Suez Canal and the Serpentine, shallow, tortuous and exceedingly narrow. The vagaries of the tide, the stupidity or recklessness of native boatmen, the dense jungle obstructing the view round awkward corners, the frequent shoals and incredibly sharp turns all add to the difficulty of its navigation and though I have passed through it some two or three dozen times I never cease to wonder that it can be negotiated successfuly. The tide flows in at either end and as a natural consequence, runs out the same way. It is necessary to time the ship's entrance to a nicety in order to get the greatest possible depth of water all the way, and in order to

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avoid meeting the inward-bound vessels at the most awkward bends. On the day in question we are already a little late so there is no delay of anchoring and waiting for the tide. We turn away from the broad stream widening towards the sea and enter the gap in the bank which forms the beginning of the creek. With our two "islands" (as the largest flats are called) in tow we have an immense breadth. Our task seems even more difficult than that of the camel or rich man of Biblical fame. How can I give you an idea of it? Picture to yourself a vessel of tremendous beam with an equally broad flat on either side steaming through a zig-zag channel scarcely wider than the steamer and flats, with a hurrying tide helping them along and tantalizing little boats scudding across their pathway. Imagine what endeavours are needed to prevent the flats smashing into the bank as they swing round a sharp corner. Think of the accumulated difficulties when the Commander sees a similar vessel bearing down on him from the opposite direction and hears a warning "by your leave" from another ship overtaking him and you will get some faint idea

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of the state of mind of the Skipper as he steers his vessel through the creek.

He sits at a table in front of the wheel and by a movement of his hands directs the helmsman. The turn of a spoke more or less may bring disaster to the vessel.

"*Dina nai,*" he says.

"*Dina nai, Sahib*" repeats the secunnie and steadies her on her course. There is a sharp bend to the left.

"*Wee jow*" says the Skipper and the wheel is put "hard over" but she does not answer her helm and a collision with the right bank seems imminent. Up springs the Skipper and, with circling arms emphasizing his meaning, commands,

"*Unda boat wee jow !*"

The flats rudders are brought into requisition but the men are stupidly slow and she changes her course just a moment too late.

"*Stop her!*"

"*Back her easy*!"

We bump up against the bank and scratch along it snapping twigs and tearing bushes but fortunately doing no damage to steamer or flat.

An old Burman in a canoe has a narrow

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escape. He and his boat are washed up the bank and left stranded in the mud. He clings to the trees with his hands and to the boat with his feet and when the danger is past smiles and assures us that there is no harm done.

A few minutes' manoeuvring with rudders and with engines get us into the middle of the channel again and we proceed. I am allowed to occupy a long chair on the forward deck on condition that I do not move and do not speak unless spoken to. At first I feel rather like a school-girl in disgrace but soon I realise that it would be fatal to draw attention away from the working of the ship at a critical moment.

A man who has been stationed on the look-out on the roof of the ship signals that a steamer is in sight.

"Yes" says the Skipper when the news is conveyed to him "I saw that twenty minutes ago,"

Then to me—

"How many boats can you see now?" I look carefully all around. We might, from the character of the scenery, be on a river in the English fenlands. Ahead of us

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the waters of the creek take a turn and disappear from view. There are flat fields on either side and in the distance a belt of trees. We seem to be in a wide ditch and rapidly nearing the end of it. There does not appear to be any water for us to travel along—much less any for approaching steamers. Then I see a faint column of smoke rising to the sky and below it, moving through the trees, the funnels of a steamer.

"*Karenee, jarge Sahib*," remarks the seccunnie.

"How does he know?" I ask.

"Oh! you'll soon be able to distinguish them all. There is very little smoke from oil-fuel and she is the only coal-burning steamer out of Rangoon at present. But that's not the only one. There are four in sight. See if you can find them."

I search carefully but search in vain. Then they are pointed out to me, two of them apparently threading their way through a forest of trees, one seeming to be going in the opposite direction instead of nearing us and the funnel of a smaller boat showing, in conjunction with several tall white sails right away to the left. It

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seemed incredible that any waterway could wind and twist and double in its tracks as this did.

Midway through the creek is a tiny village; just a few huts along the bank. It has a Burmese name (Wa-pa-louk) but all the Flotilla men know it as the "Half Way Village." As we approach we hear yells and shouts from a merry crew of little Burmese boys as they jump into canoes and paddle out to meet us. Some of the bolder spirits challenge each other to touch the side of the flat as we sweep by, or hang on the to cutter which is towing astern. All of them try to get in our wake when we have passed and enjoy the delightful sensation of being tossed up and down on the "foaming waves." Not only children go in for this sort of pleasure, old men and youths appreciate it with equal zest and women and little girls most of them with a baby carried astride on the hip, stand on the bank and laugh at the fun. It is after we have passed the village that we meet the inward-bound vessels. The little Bassein boat coming in single-handed appears to have an easy task but she is a screw steamer

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with a draught of nearly nine feet while ours is only four feet six and it is absolutely necessary for her to keep in the middle of the channel, otherwise she may ground and before being able to get off be left high and dry by the receding tide.

It is our misfortune to meet the next steamer a mail boat with one flat in tow at the middle curve of the S bend. It is an anxious, breathless five minutes but the sterns of the vessels swing clear within five feet of each other and the Tindal who has taken up his station on the after end of our port flat signals that all is well. The Skipper says that if his ship were made in sections like a railway train, or had a hinge in the middle, or could wriggle its tail out of the way like a snake, his money would be more easily earned.

Further on we meet a Burmese sailing boat which behaves just like the traditional old lady at a London crossing. Having drawn to one side to let us pass she suddenly comes to the conclusion that she is on the wrong side of the water so she starts away again and scuds across our bows and we alter our course to accomodate her.

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Then she decides that second thoughts are *not* best and tries to return. Again the steering wheel is whirled round with frantic haste and we just manage to miss running her down. The Skipper feels that he has no words that will apply to the situation but we hear the Serang on the lower deck administer a gentle rebuke to the boatman as he slides by.

After this the creek becomes wider till at last we reach China Bakir with the open sea on our left hand and a wide arm of the river on our right. It is here, amongst the trees lining the river bank that I first see monkeys in their wild state looping along from bough to bough. We take advantage of the last of the daylight to have an early dinner as the Skipper means to run late to night and has given orders that there are to be no lights on the upper deck after night fall. He does not need to use the searchlight in the broad lower waters but he can not see the way with lights at the back of him just as it is impossible to see out of the window of a lighted room into the darkness.

For a time we pace up and down the.

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forward deck while the mast-head light is hoisted into position and the side lights are adjusted. Then we rest and lean over the rail watching the prow cutting through the thoughtless saucy waves and sending them racing madly between steamer and flat only to be caught again and mercilessly chopped up by the paddle wheels. Here and there a tiny canoe with a solitary occupant flits across the dark waters. We are not aware of its presence until we see the glowing end of a cheroot which is the happy-go-lucky Burman's way of complying with the regulations regarding lights after nightfall.

After the heat of the day the night air is chilly and the breeze we meet cuts through the thin cotton clothing we are wearing. We try to persuade ourselves that we enjoy the sensation but, as every body who has lived in the tropics knows, the cold there is harder to bear than the heat.

The Skipper's voice breaks across my thoughts which had wandered "ten thousand miles away."

At his request I go and fetch a thick overcoat and box of cigarettes and order hot

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coffee to be sent along an hour later. He was at work at 4 A.M. and means to run on till midnight, a day's work of twenty hours. As for me, I try to keep awake and bear him company but cold and weariness overcome me and I soon retire to my cabin, crawl under the mosquito net and fall asleep.

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CHAPTER IV.

Up to Myanoung.

Somewhere about 3 a. m. I am wakened by a tremendous din; loud sharp reports like the firing of cannon, followed by thunderous rumblings, deafening clatter and a mighty wheezing. This is the sound that always accompanies the getting up of steam on an oil-burning boat, and, in time, I become used to it but at first it is extremely alarming. Scarcely have I fallen asleep again when a voice outside the door whines.

"*Sahib! Sahib! Char bujja, Sahib.*"

(*four o'clock sir*)

"*Atchtcha*" says the Skipper," and relapses into sleep. But the voice persists,

"*Abby char bujja, Sahib,*" and the Skipper little refreshed by barely four hours sleep goes out to superintend the heaving up of the anchor.

At 6-30 I appear on deck and immediately regret that I have not been there sooner. The air is cool and fresh and everything

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looks as if it has been cleaned and repainted during the night. The brown mud has been filtered from the river water leaving it bright and blue, untidy little clouds in the sky have been tucked away out of sight, and someone has dusted the trees and swept the land and washed the sky and polished the sun till all around is clean, clear, dazzling colour. It is sheer joy to sit down to *chota hazri* amid such delightful surroundings. I am wearing a freshly-starched muslin gown but the Skipper, I regret to say, is in pyjamas with a uniform coat hanging over the back of a chair ready to be slipped on should we meet another vessel.

I missed seeing Maubin as we passed and we are now nearing the "Hole in the Wall," the place from which one keen-eyed writer on Burma "caught a glimpse of the sea" over some hundred miles of jungle-covered delta! We pass Yandoon on the starboard side next and soon afterwards the freshly gilt pagoda at Donabyu is in sight. Here we stop and send the boat ashore to pick up a pilot.

As the day grows hotter I remain in the saloon because the glare of the sun on the water becomes intolerable. The Skipper,

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who has to keep on the look-out, always wears smoked glasses during the middle of the day. Just before we reach Henzedah I am called forward to see a very peculiar sight. Away on the top of a high bank to the left of us is perched a steamer! Some natives are cultivating the ground around around her, It seems incredible. I shade my eyes and look again. She is one of the small Ferry Steamers that carry railway passengers and goods between the Ghat at Tharrawa and Henzedah.

"But how *did* she get there? And why?" I ask. It appears that she ran aground one foggy morning at the top of the high-water season and was unable to get off. Each day the water receded further from her leaving her isolated there high and dry about sixty feet above the present water level. And there she will have to stay, for nine months probably, until the river rises again and floats her off. We fervently hope that no such fate will befall us for the Skipper would have to stand by his ship all the time with nothing to break the monotony unless he could find relaxation in growing cabbages around the keel. The feeling of disgrace also,

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would not be pleasant as other luckier Commanders sailed gaily by below.

At the Pilot station above Henzedah we pick up another Pilot. He is waiting on the bank with his bundle and umbrella beside him and when he hears the steamer's whistle he jumps into a sampan and makes for the ship. There are three men in the sampan and when they are near enough a Kalassi waiting on the flat heaves them a line which they catch and make fast. Suddenly the sampan capsizes and there are three men struggling in the river! Away goes the cutter and picks them up, three draggled, foolish, sorry looking objects. They confess afterwards that they made the line fast amidships and naturally the boat swung across the current and turned turtle. They are funny people! After fifteen or twenty years' experience on the river they are still capable of doing these amazingly stupid things.

Our first Pilot goes ashore in the sampan and we proceed up stream. The first narrow channel we pass through is called the Shwe-gyn-bouk which means, I believe, the Golden Spinning Road and the name gives some

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idea of its character. It is in places a mass of small whirlpools caused by the pent up current striking first on one bank and then on the other as it rushes down the winding channel. The bottom curve is the most difficult one to negotiate coming down stream and just as we are inside it we meet an inward bound oil steamer. We can just see the nose of her flat coming round the corner and there is imminent danger of a collision. It is a thrilling moment, but we manage to get out of her way and pass by safely. She, however has lost her "way" and is turned completely round by the current and only just avoids hitting the bank. She gets righted in time with her head down-stream again but again the current gets hold of her and swings her round, and the last we see of her as we look aft through a telescope is that she is still slowly waltzing down the Shwe-gyn-bouk.

Late at night we reach Myanoung and anchor there under the bank where two mournful and dilapidated leogryphs keep watch over the river. Myanoung is connected in my memory with two incidents, one pleasant, one otherwise.

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Once, after having anchored there for the night we were tempted to go ashore by the sound of music coming across the water. After landing we wandered about in search of the musicians hoping to find a Burmese *pwe* in progress, and were rather disappointed when we discovered that it was only some sort of a festival at a Chetty's house. We paused outside the gate of the compound and looked in. The musicians were seated on the verandah making as much noise as they possibly could. One of them was blowing into a wind instrument which gave forth a long monotonous wailing note without break or change for about five minutes at a time, another had a triangle and another a sort of drum, and the music seemed to consist of endless repetitions of a short phrase. Inside the house could be seen a brightly coloured erection something after the fashion of an altar with curious and rather hideous figures on it. Men were passing to and fro carrying lights and apparently smearing ashes on their foreheads. They were dressed in long muslin cloths disposed lightly round them, with their heads shaven and lines of paint on

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their foreheads, just as they are when attending to their money-lending business in Rangoon. They looked very different from Mussalmen who always wear most gorgeous apparel on festival occasions. Chetties are, with the exception of coolies almost the "nakedest" men to be seen in the East. They are usually fat and oily in appearance but without the benevolent aspect of the mild Bengali and their eyes have a snaky glitter underneath scowling brows. They are altogether a very unhandsome class of men, but not uncourteous, as we realised when one of them came forward, invited us into the compound and placed chairs for us to rest upon. The musicians had stopped and gone into the house but at his signal they came out again and played with redoubled vigour solely for our benefit. Meanwhile a young man from the house came forward with a tray full of sweet smelling herbs, roots and all, and offered them to us. We each selected one, but he still proffered them and from his gestures we supposed that we were expected to take the lot and did so. It was a curious little ceremony as neither of us knew the other's language and, in any

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case, our words would have been drowned by the blare of the musical instruments. To this day, I do not know what the plants were or why they were offered to us. We took them back on board with us—after taking a silent farewell of our hosts by means of salute and curtsey—and planted them in a tub of earth. One only, which smelt rather like nutmeg, survived for a week or two and then withered away. That was the close of the first incident. The other, though only a mild affair to ordinary people will linger in my memory as long as life lasts. It relates to FROGS.

Never shall I forget one evening during the rainy season when I went ashore there with the Chief Officer for a stroll. I was then a passenger on one of the cargo boats going to Mandalay. It was daylight when we landed and, neglecting pagodas and leogryphs, turned into the little wooden store at the top of the Bund where one can buy almost anything from a suit of clothes to the latest hair restorer. After purchasing—if my memory fails me not—a bottle of acidulated drops, we turned along the road and walked parallel with the river until

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darkness fell and distant mutterings of thunder betokened the approach of a storm.

We turned back at once and as we did so a flash of lightning revealed something at my feet! It was a huge ugly frog, as large as a dinner plate, regarding me with a baleful glare!

Ow! I shrieked, and sprang aside, only to disturb another which lumberingly flopped out of the way. I retreated backwards and felt something soft and *awful* under my feet. I jumped forward and landed on another and *another* and ANOTHER! Now, at any time I would rather meet the maddest of mad elephants than the most harmless little English frog, but to be surrounded by these big horrible loathsome creatures, the air full of their croaks, the roadway alive and squirming with them—the sensation was unspeakable!

I lost all control of myself, gathered up my skirts and raced blindly, madly, desperately back to the ship, plunging down the sandy band, skimming along the gangway plank, clambering up the companion ladder and never resting till I reached the saloon and felt again a good cle[illegible] carpet under my feet.

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Needless to say I came in for a good deal of chaff at dinner time when the mate recounted my adventures. The Commander who had previously been teasing me about Suffragette tendencies possessed himself of my menu card when my attention was elsewhere and next time I looked at it I saw inscribed thereon:—

'Our Suffragettes are very brave, and stern their moral code,'
'But you should see them skip and scream when meeting with a toad:'
'To principles they will adhere though they should go to jail,'
'But any beetle frog or mouse will make their stout hearts quail.'

With which appropriate epitaph, I close the chapter.

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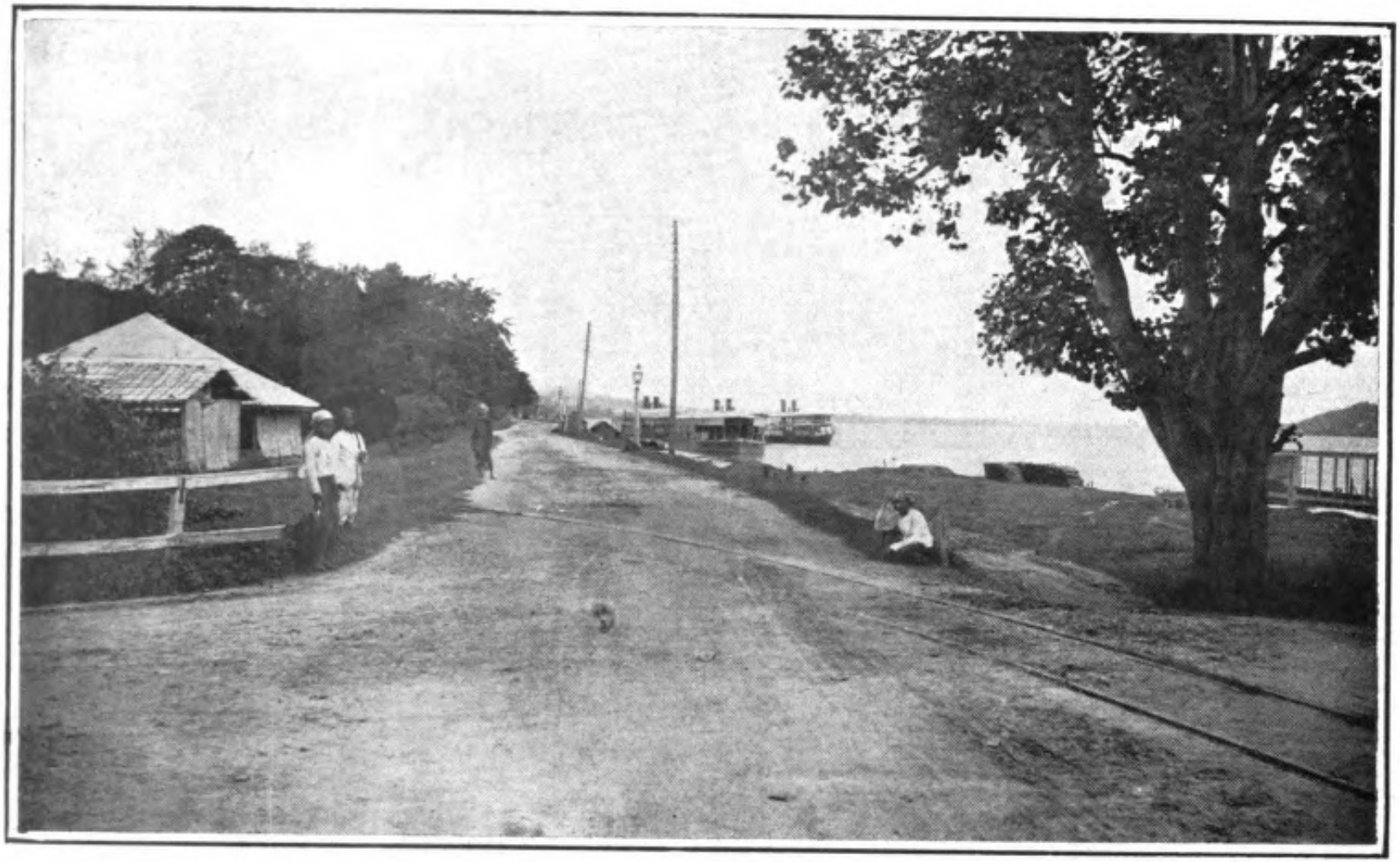

Photo by Klier, Rangoon.

Flotilla Boats alongside Landing at Prome.

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CHAPTER V.

Myanoung to Prome.

Again we get under way at day-break and start on the run from Myanoung to Prome. We do not keep to a fixed time-table as the mail and cargo steamers do, but whenever possible the trip is done in ten or eleven days, taking about six days on the upward journey, and four days coming down stream. This can be done by setting out at dawn and running on to the most convenient anchorage any time after 8-30 p.m. Any delay caused by fogs, groundings or missing the tide has to be made up by extra late running. Meals in the saloon are more or less irregular, the dinner hour varying from six, before darkness falls, till after ten, when the ship is anchored, but a certain amount of routine is always observed. After chota hazri, at the only pleasant and cool hour of the day, when one could lie back and be really at ease for a few brief fleeting moments the Skipper insists on getting uncomfortably hot at

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some ridiculous from of "exercise." How I *loathe* the word! He says that it is absolutely necessary to guard against "liver." Personally I think that of the two things "liver" is preferable. We "quick march" up and down till my ankles ache with walking on the sloping decks; we get ropes and skip until our clothes are saturated with perspiration and cling like bathing dresses; and we take turns at vigourously assaulting a punching ball till my knuckles are bruised and bleeding. It does not afford any consolation to me that the Skipper should sketch on the ball the features of his special "bête noire" of the moment; though *he* apparently derives great satisfaction from the process of obliterating the marks with sounding thumps.

I often wonder what the crew must think of our undignified antics.

After these foolish proceedings terminate there is a brief respite until breakfast-time, while the Skipper, as there is a clear stretch of water ahead, takes a tub and gets into a clean suit of uniform. Breakfast is a ponderous meal. To-day's menu is a typical one.

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Porridge
Fried fish
Savoury omelette
Beefsteak and onions
Curry and Rice
Tea or coffee.

but though it is treason to say so, I would always have preferred a plate of English bread and butter to any of the most elaborate dishes that were sent up.

The ship's butler, who writes the list, rarely makes a mistake in spelling and writes a beautiful neat hand, but, when the saloon-boy undertakes this duty, his orthography and caligraphy are most ingenious. One day he gave us "Boplanto quick" for breakfast. On investigation it proved to be "Bubble and Squeak" but, even then, the concoction when it appeared, was as far removed from the recognised dish, as his spelling was from the authorised version.

After breakfast, the Skipper, still feeling energetic, sends for his cherished set of carpentering tools and proceeds to fit a canvas screen round his writing-table so that he can sit out on deck and write while the ship is in motion without having all his

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papers fluttering and whirling around his head like snowflakes in a blizzard. The unfortunate member of the crew who is told off to help him has several unhappy moments. The work proceeds after this fashion :—

Skipper. "*Martol lao!*" (*Bring a hammer!*)

The man brings a plane.

Skipper. "*Martol* you jungle-wallah! *Martol! Martol!*"

The man brings a saw.

Skipper (cresendo and staccato) "Oh! you pagal! Martol! Martol! MARTOL!"

He imitates the action of hammering and the man interpreting it rightly, at last brings a hammer.

Then follows an interval while we pass another steamer.

A little later on :—

Skipper. "*Iss-crew-drill-lao!*"

(Not knowing the Hindustani, he mangles the English in order to make it more intelligible to the poor bemazed Chittagonian.)

The man, hopelessly at sea and not daring to confess it, tries his luck with a brace-bit.

Skipper. "Oh you idiot, you fool! *Tumhara bat nai-junta? Iss-crew-drill lao!*"

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And so on, *ad infinitum*, until the man, having sampled the whole stock of tools, the Skipper suddenly discovers that he has the one he wants under his hand all the time.

Luckily for the Kalassi, there are many interruptions to the work. The Skipper has to give all his attention to the steering as we near submerged rocks, or wind through buoyed channels, or meet other vessels.

To-day as it happens, we meet three of the larger boats coming downstream. The Flotilla colours are black and red,—"coal tar and red lead, because they're cheap" I am told—but the rails, stanchions, paddle-boxes, ceilings and most of the wood and iron-work on the lower deck are painted a dazzling white; and a Flotilla boat, in spite of its utilitarian shape and economical colours, is a very pleasant sight as it approaches over the wide space of waters with distant hazy hills bordering the horizon, a high blue sky overhead, and itself, the centre of interest, with brilliant sunshine spilling over it.

It is almost pathetic to see how eager everyone is to greet someone on the other

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boat. The Commanders seize cushions, coats, towels, or anything handy, and wave vigorously to each other and, when within hailing distance, exchange remarks through the megaphone as to the state of the channels above and below; the Chief Officer on the mail-boat semaphores to our mate; the butler hails his brother, son, or nephew as the case may be; the saloon boy flutters a dish cloth; and the secunnie, when the Captain's back is turned, gives a friendly wave of the hand to his brother secunnie on the other boat.

The chief point of interest we pass to day is Guadama Hill, a place which has been described by everyone who has visited Burma. It is a high gloomy cliff draped with sombre foliage. The whole of the river front of it has been carved into numerous niches each of which contains a figure of the Buddha. At first one does not see them; but, when their presence is realised, the air of deep brooding peace which seems to hang about the place, receives its explanation and justification. It is a strange, beautiful, sacred spot. I do not wonder that Mah Thain, my Burmese woman, drops into the

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attitude of "shi-ko" with bended knees and folded hands, when she sees it.

This is my first impression of Gaudama Hill; afterwards I always associate it with anxious moments on the downward trip; for here there is a narrow channel, a peculiar set of the current, a dangerous rock, and a nasty turning.

While the Skipper's carpentering work is in progress, my time is occupied with reading and sewing and an hour's siesta. I seldom go forward of the saloon during the day-time, as the glare of the sun on the water is blinding. After looking out over the river for a few moments and then suddenly turning back and entering the saloon, I find that everything is black and tremulous. It is some time before my eyes can adjust themselves to the change.

After tea we again take exercise by strolling up and down the forward deck. Incidentally I learn to interpret the cry of the leadsman, as they sing out the soundings in Hindustani, knowledge which has, once or twice, proved useful to the Skipper.

Later on, when we are running by searchlight, I find that my eyes, untired by the sun

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in the day time, are usually quicker than the Skipper's, or even the Pilot's, at picking up buoys; but here again I am enjoined not to give information unless asked for it.

At Prome, where we anchor for the night, we receive the home mail which has been sent up by train from Rangoon. One pilot is sent ashore, and the other, with the letters in his charge, is brought off. We anxiously watch the boat nearing the ship; and the purri-wallah, who knows that haste is expedient, stands waiting on the flat. He seizes the packet before anything else is handed out of the boat and runs with it to the "Captain Sahib" who is ready, knife in hand, to cut the string. He stands by while the letters and papers are sorted and then runs along with a goodly pile to the *Burra Maistri Sahib*. The arrival of the mail is a big event to him because his wife and the child which he has never yet seen are in Scotland and the weekly mail is all the solace *he* gets out of married life for five long years.

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CHAPTER VI.

An Hour at Thayetmyo.

Above Prome the character of the scenery changes; there are high thickly-wooded hills on either side. On the left hand as we go up stream can be seen one range behind another until the distant Arracan Yomahs limit the prospect. It is a lovely scene, especially in the early morning just after the mists have melted away and the air is left clear as crystal. The green and brown hills stand out clean-cut against a blue sky, and dazzling white and gold pagodas shine like jewels in the sun. Pretty little boats come floating down the broad river dancing and dipping among the tiny crested waves, while their sails, rigid in the steady breeze, gleam like silver and mother-of-pearl. It is beautiful beyond words, a scene that checks the breath and makes the heart ache with an indefinable longing.

But the delicate glory soon passes. It becomes brazen, almost tawdry, as the day grows older and the sun gains in strength.

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The light is so powerful that one cannot look at the view with unprotected eyes.

Above Prome too the climate is pleasanter. Though the heat is greater, it is less oppressive than in the delta where the atmosphere is charged with moisture. The rainfall from here northwards is much less than in the lower reaches.

Opposite Kama, the Skipper points out the scene of a recent accident, where, during a terrible night in the monsoons, the flat of an oil boat was struck by lightning and exploded, instantly setting the ship ablaze. All that could be done was to get away as quickly as possible bofore the fire reached the other flat. It was a race with death. The crew fought for the cutter and made off with it. Some Burmans in an oil boat towing alongside, rescued the Commander's wife who escaped in her night attire, which was afterwards supplemented by the coat of an engineer and a Burmese lungyi. She was rowed away from the doomed vessel, frantically imploring the men to turn back for her husband who was left on the ship. The Commander of the vessel jumped into the water and swam to the shore, where he

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found the engineers and the rest of the crew, and the night was passed on the river bank in a merciless downpour of rain with the storm raging around. When they arrived in Prome, towards the end of the following day, various friends provided them with what food and clothing was available and sent them down to Rangoon.

That is the story as well as I can piece it together from various sketchy accounts. Flotilla men do not as a rule talk of these things. With them—"sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Thayetmyo, a large military station, is reached before noon and we stay to buy fresh provisions. The butler is given an hour in which to make his purchases. This is often a difficult matter, because the Bazaar sellers, knowing that he has so little time for bargaining, and that this is his only opportunity for getting fresh stores, put up their prices accordingly.

Meanwhile the Skipper is engaged in buying a canoe. He made his wishes known to the Pilot, who left the ship with the butler, and soon we are surrounded by about a dozen canoes, the owners of

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which are all shouting to attract our attention. He selects one that seems most suitable and sends all the others away. Then the process of bargaining takes place in faulty Burmese helped out with much counting and displaying of fingers. Eventually we agree to give Rs. 15; far too much for a boat that was by no means new, as we afterwards learn. All this time we have been standing at the after end of the ship on the lower deck and the two Burmans in the tossing canoe have been hanging on to the wheel chains to avoid being washed away. The purchase completed, the younger man takes off his head scarf, ties the money up in a corner of it and adjusts the gaung-baung on his head again. Then they hand the painter to the Serang and, standing up in the canoe, dive, one after the other, into the river and make for the shore. They are strong swimmers both of them, but the current, which is always very swift at Thayetmyo, washes them about a quarter of a mile down stream before they can effect a landing.

The canoe, which has been bought as an extra safeguard in case of fire, is hauled on

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board. For want of a better name we decide to call it the "Emergency Exit," but both of us sincerely hope that it will never be needed in that capacity.

When we return to the saloon we find a young Burman waiting there with a display of silver ware spread around him on the deck. It is Burmese work hand-hammered and some of it very beautiful indeed. There are umbrella handles, belts, buckles, table ware, candle-sticks, rose bowls, cigarette cases, powder boxes, and jewel caskets; in fact, many things that are almost irresistible. We make a small purchase and pay for it by giving double the weight of the article in rupees, as the workmanship is particularly fine.

By this time the hour of grace allowed to the butler is nearly up, and the Skipper gives a warning blast on the whistle. Soon we see him scuttling down the long sandy bank followed by the Ramsawmy carrying his purchases, and various members of the crew laden with chickens and vegetables for their own consumption. The pilot comes at the same time, and we heave up the anchor and depart.

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Once again we

"hear the paddles chunkin.
On the road to Mandalay"

and mingling with the sound the bugle-call of the "British soldier" from the fort by the river-side.

All afternoon there are people bathing in the river. Wherever there is a village or town along the banks, there, there is sure to be a crowd of children, with a few girls and older women, disporting in the water. A Burmese woman's clothing consists of a rather tight little bust bodice, a straight skirt and a little loose jacket widening at the waist and lower end of the sleeves. For bathing purposes, the bodice and jacket are discarded and the skirt is pulled up to the armpits and fastened there, making a simple covering from shoulder to knee. The wearer wades into the stream and proceeds to splash the water over her arms and shoulders, vigorously slapping and rubbing them at the same time. Then she fills a large earthern *chattie* with the water which is required for drinking and cooking purposes, and marches up the bank with it on her head. Sometimes she has a dry

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lungyi in readiness which she slips on over the wet one, and then detaches the latter, letting it fall to her feet.

I watched for some time hoping to see some exhibition of clever swimming but no-one, not even the young boys, ventured more than half a dozen strokes away from the bank.

I was interested to see two young girls leading a cow into the water—a fawnish yellow coloured animal, rather like an Alderney except for the hump on its shoulder. They waded with it into water up to their waists and then gave it a thorough cleansing, splashing and rubbing it with their hands. This done they themselves bathed and, finally, filled their chatties and departed. "Fancy drinking the same water in which they washed the cow!" I remark to the Skipper and am horrified to learn that we get all our own water from the river; water in which thousands of people have bathed, in whose current dead bodies are constantly floating down; water which has flowed by plague and cholera stricken towns, which is fed by alligator-haunted tributaries where water-snakes swim, and elephant bathe—and I have drunk gallons of it! However I

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am somewhat pacified to learn that it is always taken from mid-stream where, on account of its tremendous volume, and the swiftness of the current, it is probably as pure as the snows on the untrodden heights from which (we suppose) it comes; that it is put into large tanks with alum to precipitate the mud, and twice filtered before being brought to table. But I am not quite reassured, and, for a day or two, I wait expectantly for some horrible malady to develop. The mail and cargo steamers, which carry passengers, are supplied with absolutely pure water from the Company's own artesian well in Rangoon, but, even then, most tourists are afraid to drink it, and some of them even take the extreme precaution of using soda water for cleansing the teeth. What *would* the poor things do if they had to take a trip on an oil boat ?

And that reminds me of the American lady who, when the faddist beside her remarked that he never drank water unless it was boiled, replied, "Wal, tastes differ. *I'd* rather have my stomach an aquarium than a cemetery."

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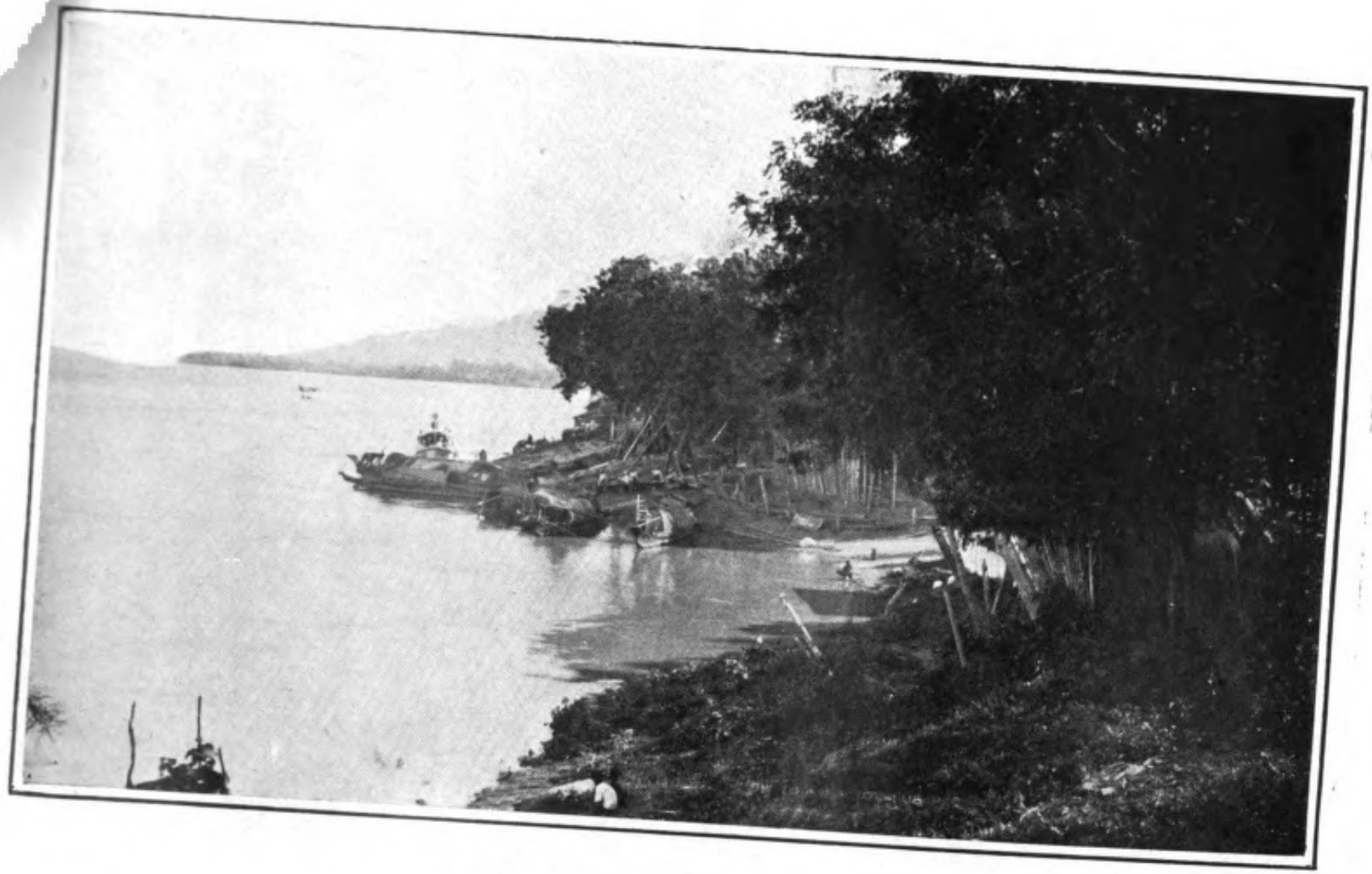

The River at Thayetmyo. Photo by Klier, Rangoon.

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CHAPTER VII.

Sunset and Searchlight.

Of course the sun has set every evening of the trip, but the fact has not been specially recorded before this, and, although the use of the searchlight has been mentioned casually once or twice, neither event has received the consideration it deserves—so says the Skipper. Let me try to make amends.

In Burma, when the sun sinks below the horizon, there is a rapid change from day to night. So sudden and unexpected is it to one accustomed to Northern twilights that it leaves one almost breathless. There is no

"Linkèd sweetness long drawn out"

as in England, no twilight, no gloaming, no quiet restful time between the daylight and darkness. Rapidly, as in the transformation scene in a pantomime, the colours change, melt, mingle, fade, and disappear into liquid blackness. It is no gliding, slow, plaintive, transitional movement

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in a minor key, but a rich, tumultuous, melodious finale to a glowing composition; one full-toned chord succeeding another, rushing along, hurrying harmoniously, till the blank dead silence is reached—the long breathless pause that seems to be the ultimate cessation of all sound, until, far away, murmurously, the low deep music of night begins.

One moment there is sunlight, glaring and merciless, the river a brazen, blinding mass of molten metal; gold-topped pagodas sheeted in flame; dazzling white spires and vivid foliage hazy and pulsing in an overwhelming superfluity of light. Another moment, and the hurtful glitter, the keen, spiky radiance have gone. All is now suffused in a rosy glow, the water is pink, the thatch on the river-side houses is flushed with soft colour, the sky is flecked with crimson. But, before the details are realised, a change has come; land water and sky are bathed in a purple flood in which there is every shade from helitrope to violet, from slate to plum colour, from mauve to the richest royal blue. Colour succeeds colour, first one hue predominating, then a momentary confusion, a riotous

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wealth of tints, then the triumphant emergence of another colour glowing and unsullied, until at last the river flows down in an indigo stream, a reflection of the darkening sky overhead. Deeper and denser grows the colour, deeper still, and then—night has come.

Each evening, at this time, I am seated on deck in the fore-end of the vessel watching the scene,—for it is well worth watching. To night there is no moon, and a drifting cloud behind us is floating away to its dissolution on the mountains of Arracan. Arched overhead is deep velvety darkness pricked out with stars. The Southern Cross—*the Southern Cross!*—shines out on our port quarter, and the familiar "home" stars are there too. How strange it seems that Charles' Wain should be jogging along in such romantic company.!

The helmsman, with the marvellous eye-sight of his race, is guiding his course by the irregular black outlines of the distant bank, but there are shoals and buoyed channels ahead, so the order goes forth:—

"*Burra batti chellao bolo!*" and, as I am vainly trying to pierce the blackness ahead,

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a sudden gleam spurts out from the searchlight in the bows and illuminates the view.

"Sunlight, moonlight, starlight, searchlight" says the Skipper as he pauses by my chair "but the greatest of these is searchlight." He goes to the searchlight motor, manipulates the handle, and the light travels round, a tongue of fire, licking the edges of the land. It falls on a little fleet of Burmese boats, anchored in company for mutual protection against dacoits; and the sleeping men start up in consternation from the decks. Then the light passes on. What heretofore appeared as grim, black shapes shine out as green hills crowned with delicate white pagodas. Feathery bamboos, slender palms, giant ferns and cactus are revealed, clear-cut and vivid. The brilliant light and sharp shadows make everything appear curiously flat. One imagines that the hills fall away in sheer precipices on the far side, and that each curve of the river-bank is a jagged promontory round which the water takes a sudden turn.

Our searchlight has the power of Midas and, when it touches on an already golden pagoda, the effect is so dazzling that one

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almost expects sparks to fly. Splashes of crimson and pink about the pagodas reveal the presence of happy devotees, or, where the colours move and interweave in growing and diminishing throngs, proclaim a festival in progress. Burmese music, shrill, merry, stirring, yet with an underlying plaintive note, ripples across the water to our ears. At intervals a deep-toned gong sounds and reverberates in tremulous contralto. Onward sweeps the light; colour, gaiety, and movement are left behind, and bare, sandy cliffs are revealed, only to be succeeded by high, lonely, wooded slopes. The whole of the varied scene is presented to view in successive circular patches of brilliancy, each one a concentration of strangeness and beauty. Then the light sinks and sweeps the surface of the water gilding the curled fringes of the waves. Birds of silver flit to and fro in the shining cone, and myriads of insects, each a speck of living fire, oscillate and wheel in intricate kaleidoscopic mazes till they look like drops in a fountain of splashing sunlight.

The Skipper, however, does not stop t study these details. He switches the ligl

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from side to side until it catches a distant sandbank, and then keeps it steadily there until we are safely by. Further ahead there are buoys marking off dangerous shallows and submerged rocks. (A buoy, on the river, is a long bamboo pole attached by a rope to a sunken bag of sand and so made to float in a nearly upright position.) In one place the channel is so winding that there appears to be a *rorest* of buoys. It is very difficult, at first, to decide whether they are red or white, but, on closer inspection, the white buoys are seen to be further distinguished by a hanging tab of bright metal which twinkles and glimmers after the manner of a heliograph as the light catches it. This arrangement is due to a clever idea of Captain Beckett, one of the Senior Commanders, for which his successors have many times had reason to bless him. He first suggested attaching old condensed milk tins to the white buoys, in order to distinguish them from the red; and from that primitive method the present system developed.

As we approach the buoys, the cries of the leadsmen become more rapid and insistent. The droning "*Teen barm millah*

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nai" gives place to "*Sari do barm*," "*Do barm*," "*Beelays kum do barm*," *Sari ek barm*" in quick succession. The Serang of each flat repeats the cry, and, at times, there is a perfect babel of voices. But, though the words are indistinguishable, it does not lead to confusion, because the men always sing out the sounding in a kind of chant, and one can tell by the *tune* what they mean, just as a belated church-goer knows, while still outside the building, and unable to hear the words, how far the congregation have got in the Responses.

The channels in the river are apt to change so quickly that, very often, the buoys are not in the true position, and the Skipper is on the alert the whole time lest the vessel should approach too near a shoal, and take a violent sheer in the opposite direction.

However, we get through successfully with the exception of one little "bump" which is soon rectified by reversing the engines and putting the helm to starboard.

Still it is a relief to be out in the open water once more and going full speed up stream.

A little later on, we are gliding along by

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the side of a high bank, when we perceive a moving gleam ahead, a shadowy wave of light rolling along the landscape. At first a mere luminous suggestion, it grows and intensifies till one realises at last that it is the searchlight of an overtaking steamer. Looking aft, all one can see is a round, blazing, malignant eye, a fearsome object, inspiring a feeling almost of dread as it steadily gains on the vessel; and the sound of throbbing engines, which accompanies it, suggests the laboured breathing of a monstrous dragon hastening after its prey.

After becoming assured that there is nothing more dreadful than a mail-boat following us, I return to my chair and the contemplation of the view ahead. Then a curious thing happens! Suddenly, close ahead of us, but nearer to the bank, a huge black shape appears! It is a steamer like ours, black, bulky and solid. She is showing no lights and she moves quietly, steadily along, gliding soundlessly. Almost every minute, it seems that we shall overtake her, but, in stately fashion, she eludes us. A phantom ship, silent and dark! It is a startling, almost gruesome sight.

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Then instantly, she disappears,—vanishes completely in less than a moment of time. It is unbelievable. She simply *was* and *is not*. In utter bewilderment I turn to the Skipper for information.

He laughs, "I forgot that you would not understand that. It is merely our shadow thrown on to the cliff by the searchlight of the steamer astern. See, there it is! Now it is gone again!"

It was undoubtedly the most solid, impenetrable, unwavering shadow I ever saw. It looked as if a good heavy hatchet would be needed to chip blocks out of it. Instinctively I had drawn back, awaiting the shock as we should crash into it. The idea of meeting a phantom ship never before seemed so terrible to me as that of seeing the ghost of a human being, but now I can understand, that, seen on the lonely seas at night, it is an Unutterable Horror.

Our searchlight now is directed steadily over the starboard bow; that of the overtaking steamer is playing about like a serpent's tongue, occasionally glinting on our anchor and stanchions, turning them into white hot luminous metal, dazzling to

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look upon. Then comes a long low blast of a whistle and the R.M.S. "Ceylon" passes by twinkling with electric lights from stem to stern. We can see the swinging punkahs and whirling fans in the saloon and the engineers mess-room. The butler and his white-robed staff are running to and fro attending to the wants of the first-class passengers. The after-deck is crowded with Burmans and native passengers, their sleeping-mats placed in long rows side by side and almost touching, for there are close on three thousand persons aboard. A yellow-robed hpoongyi is lying prone poring over a devotional work, and little children have gathered to the rails to look at us and exult over the faster speed of their vessel. On the lower deck all is darkness where the Commander is directing the steering, but the lights amidships reveal a full cargo piled up in compact masses. She passes quickly, and we are left rocking in her wash. She is carrying the mails to up-country stations and still has far to go, but, for us on the smaller vessel, the day's work is done; the paddles slow down to silence, the searchlight sweeps round for the last time tracing a bright semicircle along the path of the horizon and

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then is darkened leaving everything strangely dull and quiet. The Skipper strides forward, leans over the rail and speaks quietly to someone on the lower deck. Then—"*Chau do*"! he says, and a rattle and splash follow his words, as the anchor falls.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Nyounghla at Last.

Next morning, about twenty minutes after getting under way, we pass Battery Point, where one of the rocks is white-washed to enable mail steamers, who take this part of the river after dark, to pick it up easily by searchlight. Here there is a large patch of eddy water, a confused mass of offsets, back washes and cross currents uniting in the centre to form a dangerous whirlpool. The ship groans and strains as she enters the choppy waters on the margin, and, with the engines opened out to top speed, she barely makes headway across the central glassy space where the waters seem to drag and cling like glue. There is one thrilling moment when she is lifted up helpless, about to yield to superior force, and join in the slow deadly waltz of whirling waters. The paddles lose their grip, and flap round and splash ineffectually, but, with a supreme effort, she ploughs forward, and shoulders her way along, gradually gaining speed as

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the turbulent waters are left behind. A shallow-draught vessel like this floats like a balloon on the water and is naturally very much at the mercy of winds and currents.

Not long after this, we meet an oil steamer which has evidently come to grief, for water is flowing over the decks of the flats, and they are crowded with men. She has struck a rock and is struggling down to Rangoon with all pumps working. We stop to lend her our pulsometer. A little later on the Skipper becomes very interested in something he sees ahead. He studies it through his binoculars and then turns his telescope on the object. The secunnie also notices something unusual, for he hazards the opinion,

"*Jaharge lak gia Sahib.*"

"There's a B. O. C. launch aground over there," says the Skipper, "I shall have a shot at pulling her off."

He signals for "Easy ahead" and, altering the course, creeps cautiously nearer the grounded vessel which is making no progress, though the screw is churning up the water at full speed. Some one, attired in pyjamas and an overcoat, is superintending

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the operations, so it occurs to me that it would be discreet to retire before my presence is noticed; but the venetians of a cabin window do not altogether hide the view, especially when they are tilted just a little way open.

A conference by means of the megaphone is taking place.

"Want any help?" says the skipper.

"Guess I dew!" comes back, "this bally, black heathen put me here at two this morning and I want to get to Nyounghla to-night."

"Right oh! I'll do what I can Mr.——" says the Skipper, who recognises the voice.

We port the helm and, going easy ahead about a couple of ship's lengths, drop the starboard anchor, pay out chain and pass over a towing wire. All this takes some time, but, when everything is ready and the wire properly made fast, five minutes' steady heaving on our chain is sufficient to float the launch. She dips gently as she slides off the sand bank and takes to the water, steaming gaily ahead in answer to her own engines.

"Reckon that'll do now" comes the voice from the launch. It's up to me to return

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this some day. Hope you'll never need it! See you in Nyounghla, unless this confounded son of a gun starts ploughing green fields again with the boat's keel."

All that now remains is to take in the towing-wire and heave up the anchor. I emerge from my seclusion and come on deck.

"That's a good hour's work done," the Skipper says, as he prepares to depart, and he settles down into his chair with a sigh of relief as he gives the order "Full speed ahead.' After a moment or so he sits up and looks round, then jumps to his feet and takes his bearings. The pagoda that was in a line with the third stanchion is still in the same position, strange to say. Half a minute more and the truth dawns on him. We have not moved! In floating the launch we have managed to ground ourselves. The engines are worked for a few minutes more with no results, so he stops them and sends a man with a bamboo pole to take soundings all round the vessel. Just abaft the port sponson he gets "ek hath"—18 inches of water. And now the whole performance has to be gone over again—only more so—because it is

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necessary to lay out the big anchor and about ninety fathoms of chain.

First a kedge anchor weighing about eight hundredweights is laid out some distance ahead and slightly to starboard and then a forward or bower anchor, of say, 18 cwts, and about 30 fathoms of chain are lowered into the cutter while a second boat follows up with the rest of the chain. It is impossible to row against the current with the heavy cutter and its heavier load, so the men haul out into position by pulling on the kedge rope, paying out chain as they go along. Then they tilt the boat somewhat, by throwing their weight all to one side, and lever the anchor off the platform. It is dangerous work. Mates are never sent in the boats laying out big anchors, because the crew would have such an easy opportunity to pay off old scores, as an unpopular mate would find to his cost. It would be a very simple matter to make the boat turn turtle altogether when the anchor was dropped, and, simpler still, to crowd a man down into the water in the confusion that followed.

The crew have had a long spell of hard

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and heavy work, and, by this time, are getting tired. Probably the serang is tired too, but, if so, he displays the fact by swearing at the crew with great energy than before. Of course I do not understand much of what he says, but I should judge, by his tones and gestures, that any twenty of the most voluble Billingsgate costers would be put to shame in a test of eloquence. The men behave as only Chittagonians *can*, when they wish to be awkward, and each mistake calls forth a fresh stream of vituperation, shrieked and screamed and *spat* out at them in apish fury by the Serang.

It is rather amusing, because there are two of his own sons amongst them, and, as swearing in Hindustani consists largely in casting reflections on a person's parents and antecedents, the Serang cannot really be considering what he is saying. The Skipper thinks that it is inconsistent with my dignity to remain within hearing of such remarks, so again I disappear. The launch that we pulled off turns back and offers assistance, but it is not likely that she would be of much use; and, as night is coming on, the Skipper declines the offer. After working

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the engines and heaving on the anchor till darkness has fallen, he decides to postpone further efforts till daylight.

It is fortunate that he does so, because, during the night, the sand cuts out, and just after dawn, a cargo steamer passes down stream. She steams past us and proffers help, but it is not needed, because her wash lifts us up off the bank, and a timely turn on the engines with a simultaneous heave on the anchor does all that is necessary. It is the work of a moment. Three orders rapped out in quick succession,

"*Avis Karo!*"

"Easy ahead!"

"*Dina Jow*," and we are afloat in the channel again.

We meet with no further mishaps before reaching Nyounghla, where the empty flats are cast off to be filled with oil. There are other flats ready to bring down, but we have orders to go on a little further and load ground-nuts.

Nyounghla is a desolate place, dry and almost treeless, lying baking in the heat. There is a long stretch of sand, and running across it, an iron-pipe through which the oil

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is pumped into the holds of the flats. An ugly, corrugated-iron building shelters the pumping apparatus, and several large round oil tanks can be seen dotted about in odd places. Inland, the ground is bare and undulating, and, a little further north, the line of hills breaks off at the river's edge in sandy cliffs, on the top of which are perched several scattered bungalows. Between the cliffs and the water there is a narrow strip of sand. It is here that the bags of ground-nuts are piled up, awaiting our arrival. A man is standing on the top of the heap, waving a flag to attract our attention, so, when the flats have been berthed alongside the station flat, we proceed up stream single-handed and go alongside.

As soon as the gangways are rigged, there is a rush on board. The traders, several Burmans and a Chinaman, are all anxious to get their cargo taken first. They actually invade the saloon and peer into the cabins in search of the Skipper. There is much talking before all is settled, but the two who are rejected are soon consoled by seeing a cargo steamer coming down stream and turning

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round to take up their contributions. Then follows another dispute, this time because the coolies wish to put the cargo on the lower deck first and the Skipper will not allow it, because he knows that, if they do so, they will knock off work when the lower deck is full, and refuse to load the rest.

At last they begin. Each coolie has a sack hoisted on to his shoulders and a tally stick put into his hand. He trots along the gangway, passes the stick to one of the crew, whose duty it is to collect and count them, and then drops the sack on the upper deck.

A coolie always has such thin legs that one expects them to snap like a carrot across the shins under the load he carries, and the brown shoulders glistening with perspiration, look too narrow and weak to support their burden. The Burman coolies are slightly more muscular in build than the natives of India. The latter are a curious looking crowd. Some of them have absolutely faultless Greek profiles; all of them appear to possess some degree of dignity and intelligence, yet their behaviour is childish in the extreme. When off duty, they can be seen trotting along, hand in

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hand, laughing and chattering like babes of of two years old, or wandering about in sentimental silence with their arms around each other.

But this is a digression. One is not left long to speculate on the habits of coolies, for the Commander of the cargo boat lying above us comes on board, and I endeavour to entertain him until the Skipper, who is tubbing, shall appear,—clothed and in his right mind. After chatting for a few minutes the visitor, who is an old friend, remarks,

"Its a long ship, this." *

"Oh, I'm sorry" I say, acting on the hint. "Boy bring whiskey and soda!"

I had actually forgotten that we were "East of Suez" where it is almost a crime to omit the universal custom of offering a peg.

At this point, a vision, attired in a Turkish towelling bath gown, flits by into the cabin and a voice sings out through the venetians,

"Hold on! Don't be in such a cast iron hurry. Wait till I come." And, soon after, the Skipper arrives looking very smart in his clean white uniform.

* Sailor phrase—"long time between drinks"

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"Well any news?" he asks as he stretches himself luxuriously in a long chair, and sets down an empty glass.

"Nothing startling," is the answer, "Anything happened down below?"

"I see that So-and-So has come to grief" the Skipper replies. "I met him below Palow taking down a holed flat."

"Quite time he went home," the other man says, "he's breaking up, and I don't wonder at it,—"

And so the conversation goes on. For an hour, I sit and listen to undiluted "shop." Sailors are well known to be good grumblers. Flotilla men live up to their reputation. If I am to believe all I hear, this is the worst low water season within the memory of man; never have the channels been so shallow and winding, never has the river taken such an awkward and unexpected course, and never has there been less water in the Irrawaddy than just now. The Skipper says that he can take his ship over a good heavy dew, but she won't sail over dryland, and he threatens to drop the "killock" and take casual leave, and go shooting until he gets water enough to float him.

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There is reassuring news from up above, however, for the Bhamo agent has sent word to the Rangoon Office that "nothing short of a cosmic miracle" will prevent a rise coming down soon.

We have been discussing, dinner, as well as Flotilla "gup," during part of the time, and the menu is as unvaried as the conversation.

Clear soup (*i.e.*, Chicken broth)
Chicken crumb cutlets
Boiled fowl, or
Roast capon
Curried chicken and rice
Baked custard

The butler has nothing else on board except tinned salmon, and he is forbidden to give us that more than six times a week,—so we omit the fish. It is said that every part of a pig, except the squeak, is eaten. I am quite sure that everything pertaining to a "moorghi" is used for food, except the feathers, and I should not be at all surprised to see a pudding made of *them* some day.

The best part of the dinner is the coffee afterwards, which is sent out to us periodically from the Stores, it being impossible

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apparently, to obtain good coffee in the country where it is grown.

Before dinner is over we have another visitor from one of the lonely Bungalows at the top of the cliffs. The Skipper who patronises "Bushmills" points to two bottles, one round and the other square.

"Will you have Scotch or Whisky?" he asks.

"I'll try your brand, thanks."

The visitor tries it, but is not particularly enthusiastic about it.

"Too tame altogether," he says, "you want something that bites, something that warms you up. Ever heard of the kind that we have over in the States? It's called Squirrel Whiskey."

The Skipper looks down and does not answer.

"Squirrel Whiskey," says the Chief Engineer innocently, "never heard of it. What's it like?"

"Makes you climb trees," comes the answer in an exaggerated drawl,—and the Chief subsides.

Soon afterwards our guests take their departure. We lean over the rail and watch

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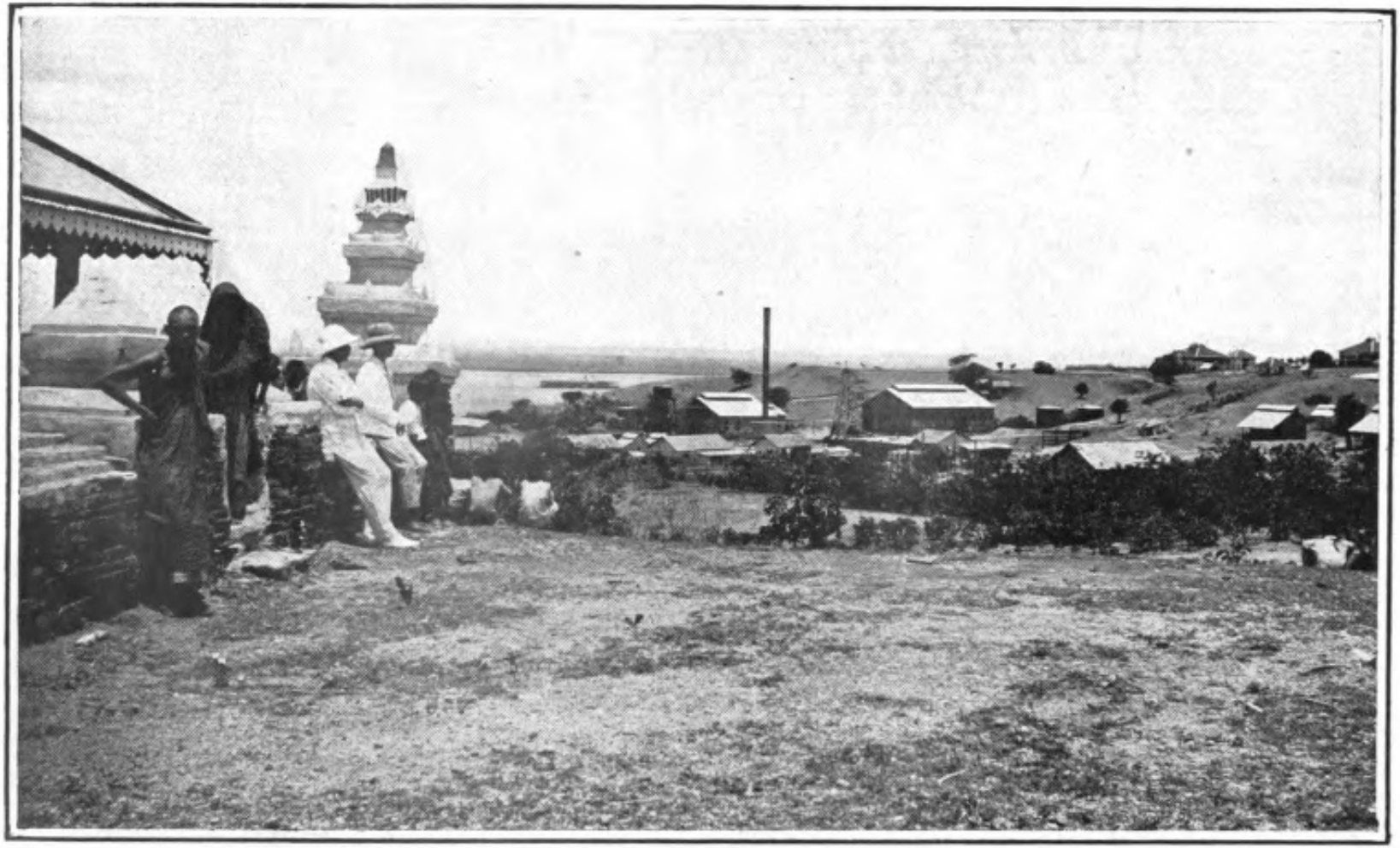

Photo by Klier, Rangoon.

Oil-Pumping Station at Nyoungla.

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them, preceded by a Lascar carrying a lamp, picking their way across the sands until they reach the other ship, and disappear from view.

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CHAPTER IX

A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

Next morning the downward journey commences. It is much hotter than when going upstream, because we are travelling in the same direction as the breeze, what there is of it, and the stacks of cargo prevent it reaching us from aft.

The Skipper has given special warnings regarding lights and smoking, because the nuts, which we are carrying, are oily and the shells as dry as tinder, while the bags they are in have been baking in the sun until they are almost charred. It is a most inflammable cargo, to say nothing of the fact that we have about seven hundred tons of crude oil on either side of us. The Skipper is constantly impressing upon me, "In case of fire, run aft," because anyone getting into the water from the for'd end would only be washed back into the wheel, between the burning vessel and the flat full of oil,—not a very pleasant situation as one would suppose.

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Going downstream, he again explains that I must "run aft," because, should there be danger, he would endeavour to drop the anchor, (when the ship would swing round to it with her head upstream,) and cut loose the flats before the fire reached them. The crew always have hatchets handy for that purpose. He tells me this as we pass by the wreck of the "Yomah" which can be seen in the low water season, partly above the water, opposite Nyounghla. It is a terrible tale he unfolds, of fire and disaster, of terrified natives foolishly rushing forward, and, cut off by the flames, left to face certain death by either burning or drowning—a tale that, perhaps, is best forgotten, save that it reminds others to take all precautions to ensure safety.

I confess that I feel a little nervous sometimes, but one soon gets used to the life, and the thought of danger seldom arises. One would run much worse risks for the sake of living with one's husband on the river, instead of enduring a lonely existence in the steamy heat of Rangoon, apart from one's home and children and friends, with no congenial companionship, except during

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the brief spells when one's husband is in port.

After all, there are many worse things than being drowned or blown to pieces in an explosion. "From long illness, lingering death and years of bereavement, Good Lord deliver me!" is a clause which I always insert in my own private Litany.

Just above Magwe the Skipper points out a high headland close by the village of Lepanzeik. "That is known as 'Beckett's Bluff!" he says.

"Why?"

"Well this is how I heard the story. I don't know whether it is true. Beckett was coming down by there one day when his cabbage flat,—"

"*Cabbage* Flat?"

"Yes, they used to be painted green "to save the Captain's eyes"—it was Flat 87 I think,—grounded in "*teen barm millah nay*"

"But how could it?" I ask.

"That's what everybody wanted to know, but Beckett declared that he got three fathoms, and there is no doubt that the flat grounded. I think he suggested that there was a spur of sand, or something of that

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sort. Some wit spoke of it as "Beckett's Bluff" and the name has stuck to the place since."

On this day two members of the crew meet with accidents. One of the engine-room crew, a Chittagonian, is terribly scalded in a jet of steam. Frantic with pain, he rushes on to the upper deck, and tears about madly, twisting and bending in agony. I see him, but do not realise at first that he is hurt. His contortions remind me of a man I once saw dancing in front of the coffin at a Burmese funeral, and I call the Skipper's attention to him. He at once sees what is the matter, and proceeds to bandage the poor fellow with cotton wool soaked in carron oil, while the Serang and others of the crew stand round exclaiming at intervals.

"*Ar-eh byai! Ar-eh gharib byai! hum lok kya karna sakta?*"

("Oh brother! Oh my poor brother! what shall we do?")

When we reach Minhla the man is sent ashore to hospital with another of the crew to look after him.

Soon after we are under way again, the

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cook runs up from the galley, covered with blood. A soda water bottle has burst and cut an artery in his arm. He is an old man, bleeding to death, but the Skipper is in a critical part of the river, and absolutely cannot leave the steering for a few minutes, so he sends the man along to the Chief Engineer who manages to check the flow of blood by holding the arm. Then, when the Skipper is at liberty, he goes along with bandages. It is a nasty, messy business. Time after time the blood spurts out afresh, just when it seems that it has been got under. In the end, I am called into service to take a sponge and water and wipe the blood from the Skipper's face and eyes, so that he can see what he is doing. The poor old man is nearly dead before the bleeding is finally stopped and is very weak and ill for several days afterwards. Still, he flatly refuses to go to hospital when the opportunity arises. He has great faith in the Skipper as a medicine man, and he declares that he would much rather be doctored on board.

Accidents never happen singly, and, before the trip is over, though not on this day, another one occurs which may as well be

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chronicled here. It happened as just retribution to one of the flat's crew, as he was sleepily leaning up against the wheel with his arm round the spokes paying no attention to the steering.

Suddenly we swung round a sharp bend in the river, and the wheel took charge. The man could not get clear of it, and was hurled clean over, with his heels in the air, landing with a crash on tne other side, and breaking his leg. It was some hours before we reached a station where there was a hospital, and then he had to be taken ashore in the cutter, and carried on a hatch up a high, steep bank, where the men's feet kept slipping in the loose sand, and the mid-day sun was blazing down upon him.

Once too we had a man overboard. The young idiot, fresh from his native jungle, thought that he would steal the time for a bath when he should have been working, so he made a line fast to a bucket and, standing on the stern of the flat, which is unprotected by a rail, flung the bucket overboard to draw up the water. We were going full speed downstream, about fifteen miles an hour, and naturally, he was dragged into

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the river, and left about a quarter of a mile behind, before we could stop and go astern. The boat was got away at once, but some Burmans in a canoe reached him first, and picked him up. Needless to say he had lost the bucket, for which he received a sound rating from the Skipper, to say nothing of the dressing-down he got for delaying the steamer when every moment of day-light was needed in order to reach a good anchorage. I think, also, that the crew rubbed it into him for the extra work he had occasioned them. He was a very subdued person for some time afterwards.

A little distance below Minhla we anchor for the night, and, as it is still early, seize the opportunity for a run on dry land. We take the boat and go over to a large sand-bank near by which, though bare and uninteresting, is firm enough to allow of a good, brisk walk. It is a long, desolate stretch of sand, with absolutelynothing on it but a half buried log of teak which has probably drifted away from a raft. This is valuable, of course, but no one attempts to steal it because of the difficulty of disposing of it.

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After a short spell ashore, we go back on board, and so an eventful day comes to an end in an uneventful manner.

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CHAPTER X.

BRIDGE AND OTHER THINGS.

Below Minhla we pass the village of Meegyoungyai, which means "Alligator-Water." Here the Skipper points out a house with a story attached to it. It was occupied, at one time, by a Flotilla agent and his wife. This man went out one day, and shot an alligator which he saw in the river. Unfortunately, this alligator happened to be the special pride of the villagers who believed that it belonged to the Nats (spirits) of the place, and some of them, in revenge, entered the house and seized the agent's wife, one night when her husband was away, and cut off both her hands. In spite of this terrible mutilation, she lived for several years afterwards. The miscreants could never be traced, and the villagers declared that it was a Nat, in the form of a dacoit, who had done the deed.

I append the story as it was written out for me in English by a Burmese clerk.

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'In the year 1899 there was a village called
'Meegyoungyai, which situated at the eastern
'part of the River Irrawaddy.
'In that village a European Gentleman
'named Mr. X——, who used to be an agent
'for Messrs The Irrawaddy Flotilla Coy Ltd.
'One day Mr. X——seen a crocodile in the
'River, had a shoot and killed him.
'After a few days Mr. X—proceeded to Mimboo
'for some purposes and stay there for a day or
'two, during that period Mrs. X——and
'servants were remain in the house. On
'one night a man with a dah in his
'hand entered into the house, seized
'Mrs. X——and dragged her out from the
'dwelling and cuts off her both hands, in
'the same instant the man was disappeared.
'A report was made to the Police
'Officers immediately. Enquiries were spread
'over the Villages and Neighbours by the
'Polices but all was in Vain.
'Mr. X——being as a wealthy
'Gentleman with the property in that village
'but none of his properties were taken away
'by that man.
'After a week time a woman professing to be
'possessed by a Nat states to the public, not
'to make any enquiries for the man who
'cuts Mrs. X——hands, and saying that is
'the punishment done by the Nat; whose
'crocodile was killed by her husband.

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Still going downwards we pass by Allan-myo and Thayetmyo, reaching the rock channel at Pyimbauk without incident, but here we meet with an accident. We enter the channel serenely, but are not quite quick enough at taking a bend, and the starboard flat enters into shoal water and shoves her nose down into the mud, while the ship forges ahead. The towing ropes squeak and groan, as the extra strain falls on them, and then snap with loud reports like pistol shots, and the flat (as the Skipper afterwards describes it) "goes sky-hooting all over the river."

"*Unda boat lungar chau do!*" (Let go the flat's anchor), roars the Skipper as the flat swings, but the crew fumble with the chains, and the anchor drops just too late. The huge flat swings round with the current, and her stern strikes the rocky bank, buckling up the heavy rudder. Of course that is quite bad enough, but it is a fortunate thing that she is not punctured as well, as it seemed almost certain that she would be. Having picked up the flat again and passed new towing lines—an operation entailing an hour's strenuous work—we pro-

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ceed, dropping down the channel stern first and missing the outlying ledge of rock on the East bank by practically nothing at all.

Prome is reached at noon, but our delay with the parted flat has given another oil steamer, the "Pekin" a chance to catch us up. She arrives at the station exactly at the same time as we do, and each Skipper tries to be first to pick up the waiting pilot, as there may be some delay before another is roused from his home and brought down to the shore. As soon as we are turned round, the boat is away, but the "Pekin's" boat has started too, and a most exciting race takes place. The other crew row a little better and reach the flat first, but their steersman sends them crashing into it at right angles, and they bungle over throwing the painter, so our men steal in and carry off the pilot triumphantly, leaving the Pekin to wait for the next man.

The Skipper is quite jubilant over his success and gives a tantalising hoot on the whistle as we get under way again.

Soon after this we come to the channel at dama Hill, the true beginning of the a. Here the river is very wide, but

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sandbanks, both visible and submerged, divide and divert the waters. The main channel takes a turn and crosses over from the left bank of the river to the right-bank, where the dammed-up current becomes a rushing torrent striking the cliff and boiling up against the rocks, until it is again deflected to the left. The "Munepoor's" engines are not particularly powerful, and this corner needs skilful negotiation. The Skipper gets the ship steadied into the dead centre of the channel, eases her down, and then, just before the point of rock is reached, stops her and lets her drift with the current, keeping nearer to the rocks than the shore, and cautiously putting the helm over to counteract the force of the current which seems maliciously determined to hurl us on the rocks. Just at the critical moment, when the turn is reached, he rings up "double full speed," and everything depends on the prompt response of the engines. It needs all the power they have to drag the ship clear of the seething maelstrom at the bottom of the cliffs. With a floating cargo of oil the working of a ship at places like this is doubly difficult. The frequent turns and

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twists in the winding channel leave the liquid swinging from side to side in the holds, and hinder the flats from answering true to their helms, and, if the ship *did* strike the rocks, the whole mass of oil would mount up into a sort of following wave, and ram it on harder than ever. On the present trip we have the bent rudder of the damaged flat to add to all other difficulties.

While we are passing by the point I notice a wreck buoy marking the spot where a Bombay-Burma launch struck and sank a short time ago. As I have said before, this place is exceedingly interesting to tourists, but it would be more so still if they knew what it meant to the Commander of their vessel. With the extra powerful engines of the new mail boats the danger is minimised, but there is still enough to cause a slight thrill, especially if one looks aft and watches the stern of the boat swing round, apparently missing the rocks by only a few feet.

It is surprising how quickly we pass from town to town coming down stream. It takes just about half the time it would to go a similar distance in the opposite

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direction against the current.

Just above Talokmyo, where a pagoda marks the spot, "where the Chinaman looked up," we anchor for the night. The legend of the place, briefly, is this.

Many, many years ago, a Chinaman was sent by a Buddhist community in China to consult with a dignitary of the same faith in Ceylon about religious matters. Instead of travelling in the ordinary fashion, he descended into the earth and proceeded underground, where a passage conveniently opened out before him as he went along. Arrived at this particular spot he "looked up," and rose to the surface to see what progress he had made on his journey. Wherever he indulged in this little diversion a pagoda was erected to commemorate the event, and this pagoda, still standing there, is evidence, so the villagers say, that the story is true.

Darkness falls as we are anchoring and we decide that it is too late to go ashore, so we lean over the side and chat, and watch the twinkling lights on the river.

"That's a Bombay-Burma launch over there" says the Skipper, and, as we look, there floats a voice over the water.

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"Munepoor ahoy! Say Skipper, is that you? Bring the Chief across and have a hand at Bridge. I've got another man here."

"Can't," sings out the Skipper, "Mem-sahib's on board. Come over here."

"Oh! All right thanks! We'll be across in a minute."

The rather long "minute" is occupied I surmise in getting out of their *lungyis* or Shan bags into decent clothes. Meanwhile we await their arrival with interest, because we have not the least idea whose voice it was addressing us.

At length they come aboard, and the Skipper instantly recognises one of them as a man he had last seen in Bhamo, near the Chinese frontier, about nine years previously. At present, he is having the rather strange experience of travelling down the river on a raft of teak logs. The only accommodation he has is a little mat hut built on the centre of the raft, and this forms a rather inadequate protection from the noon-day heat and the cold at night. He had already been more than thirty days on the voyage which, though perilous at times, he found

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exceedingly tedious. With the usual gallantry of the men in Burma, he had very kindly brought with him, as a present for me, the skin of a tiger which he had shot during the trip.

It is rather a pleasant experience being a "Memsahib" in Burma. We, poor, hapless women, don't get half the appreciation we deserve in England, where there is a surplus million of us, but in Burma, where Englishwomen are few and far between, the men have returned to the age of chivalry, and all of them—barring husbands—do their best to spoil us. I have tiger skins, sandal-wood boxes, Shan embroideries—even gloves, to testify to this.

The other man who has come on board is a "Griffin," newly out from home, and a stranger to us. He is living a lonely life on the launch, and is delighted at the prospect of company for a few hours, to relieve the monotony of his existence.

After a little gossip and exchange of reminiscences, we settle down to Bridge,—not a very scientific game perhaps—but a very pleasant one and highly appreciated by all four of us, since the opportunity for one so

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seldom occurs.

While the game is in progress a steamer passes down stream. To an inexperienced eye there is nothing visible but the mast head light and the side lights on the flats, but the Skipper recognises her. "That's the "Pekin," he says, "Good Heavens! I wonder what the man's made of. Eighteen hours a day is quite enough for me. But I'll catch him up yet—the swab!"

However, there is special reason for this extra work, as we learn when we reach Rangoon.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE END OF THE TRIP.

By this time we are amidst the delta scenery again, where the brimming river sweeps round by thickly-wooded islands and jungle-covered banks. As the day grows hotter, one longs to leave the ship and rest in the shade of the trees where everything looks deliciously cool and quiet. But we slide by the banks so quickly that there is little time available to appreciate the scenery. We pass again the stranded steamer looking more than ever like a "faked" photograph. Surely, the sea roaring round St. Pauls would not look more incongruous than cabbage plots around a ship!

At Donabyu we drop the last pilot and proceed without one for the rest of the journey. Yandoon is the next large village that we pass—Yandoon where the "ngapee" comes from. Ngapee—this for the benefit of the unintiated—is a condiment made from fish in an advanced state of putrefaction; therefore, it is almost superfluous to add,

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Yandoon assails the olfactory senses long before it appeals to the eyes. A pretty little creek cuts across the delta here from the Irrawaddy to the Rangoon river, a creek that is now too shallow and too narrow for the larger Flotilla vessels, but affording passage for small launches and native craft.

After passing through the "Hole in the Wall" we come to another of the awkward bends in the river by the village of Sitchoung which is built along the hollow of the curve. The river is year by year adding to the silt on the east bank and eating out the curve on the west. Some day, most probably, it will break through the bund and devastate the village, but, until it does, the Burmans will not trouble to move their houses. What if the water *does* flow into their lower rooms? They use them as boat-houses, and tie up their canoes there every night when the day's work is done. Burmans are happy people and always see the bright side of things.

We are now fairly down into mosquito land, where even the cattle have to be protected against these vicious little pests. A new-comer to Burma is always regaled with

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various yarns about these creatures, and listens horrified until the narrator concludes by assuring him that most of the larger mosquitoes have been shot or tamed and the remaining ones are not half so savage as they were. In spite of all that is said however, the present day mosquitoes are quite ferocious enough, and manage to torture Europeans and Burmans alike. As evening comes on, fires are lighted in the villages, and dense columns of thick pungent smoke roll along before the breeze. It is noticeable that the villagers seat themselves on the smoky side of the fire in order to get some measure of protection from the insects.

On board, their presence is soon felt. They arrive in hungry hordes and set to work to sting and stab—paying particular attention to wrists and ankles—until the Irritation is maddening. They seem to get more determined and malicious as we near Maubin, that place where the European inhabitants have to live in meat-safes, in order to be able to live at all. On the passenger steamers, it was at one time customary for the second mate to be told off to serve out pillow-cases to the lady-passengers at din-

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ner-time, so that they might tuck their feet and skirts in and so endeavour to disappoint the mosquitoes in wait under the table. But *experientia docet*. After trying this very inadequate means of protection once, and spending nearly an hour afterwards trying to allay the pain with liquid ammonia, I find that the best plan is to go dinnerless to bed at sunset when we anchor near Maubin. There in the cabin, with the mosquito net carefully tucked in all round under the mattress, one can lie and laugh defiance at the pests. Heat and suffocation and hunger are preferable—*infinitely* preferable to their torturing attentions. Nothing is more calculated to fill one with hatred and rage and helpless fury than the sight of one of these bloodthirsty little vampires flying away bloated and replete to rest in torpid serenity until ready for another meal.

One dare not think of the sufferings of the poor English "Tommies" in former years as they passed through "Mosquito Creek" at night, sleeping, or rather trying to sleep, on the open deck with no nets to protect them. How they must have struggled against the

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cruel little foes, tossing and turning, vainly hoping for rest, lying still, perhaps, until the limit of endurance was reached, and then fighting frantically, as swarms and regiments and armies of them hovered round stinging relentlessly. No wonder that, once or twice, there was a despairing imprecation, a quiet spash in the night time—and Someone had lost the number of his mess.

And now comes the tenth, and last, day of the trip. The first point—or rather curve—of interest in the river is Butterfly Bend which always causes an anxious moment, but is usually negotiated successfully. In places like this the river appears to behave like a frolicsome kitten trying to catch its own tail. It never actually makes a complete loop, but it does everything short of that. Perhaps, if one could rise high enough in a balloon and survey its course from mouth to source, one would find some mystic word revealed, written in water across the face of the land,—and that word, assuredly, would be traced in the Burmese characters, for no others are so undulating and curvilinear.

Lower down we meet a great number of

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native boats, with all sails spread, coming swiftly out of the mouth of the Twante Creek, and, while trying to clear them, the bows of our ship get into slack water, and the strong current acting on the stern turns us completely round. There is much shouting and confusion on the smaller boats, but, eventually, they all draw into the bank and keep there till we have turned round again and proceeded on our way.

As we pass by Dedaye the Skipper looks out for orders, which are chalked on a notice-board and displayed on the station flat. They are:—

Flat 86—Pegu
Flat 112—Hastings

which means that he has to go up the Pegu River and cast off one flat, while the other is to be taken above the Hastings and moored there. He also tries to see the time by a clock on a launch and compare it with the ship's time; but he is not so successful in this respect as he was at Prome, where he always consults the clock on the Jubilee Tower by means of a telescope.

We are running down now to catch a tide, but, on arriving at China Bakir and

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consulting the tide guage, we find that there is plenty of time to spare, so the ship is anchored for about half an hour, and the Skipper fills up the time by going out in the cutter and taking soundings round about. At China Bakir we are close to the open sea, and the tide, as it runs up the narrow arm of the delta, causes the ship to roll in a not too pleasant fashion. More than once, I confess, I have been seasick at China Bakir, but that was in the monsoon weather.

As we are weighing in the anchor, a mail steamer arrives down and enters the Creek, and we follow her.

The passage through the Bassein (or Thakôk-pin) Creek has been described before, and this journey is very like the other one. Various objects which I had not noticed on the outward trip attract my attention. There is the Danot Pagoda on the North bank—a well-known landmark, particularly to engineers who look for it to judge when they will be out of the Creek. Coming in towards Rangoon it can be seen quite a long way off.

Towards the end of the Creek, about a hundred yards or so back from the water,

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is a grotesque figure with its head as high as the trees around it, its hideous face appearing through gaps in the foliage. It is probably built of bricks and cement and is painted in brilliant colours, blue and yellow predominating. I have avoided calling it an 'idol' or an 'image' lest I should convey a wrong impression. It is probably no more an 'idol' than a scarecrow, or the statue of Nelson in Trafalgar Square, and no doubt it combines the useful purposes of both. This has probably been set up by a Hindu community. They have a fondness for wondrous and fearsome looking objects—as also have the Chinese. Burmans usually confine themselves to statues of the Buddha, or leogryphs.

And here let me record the fact that Buddhists do not worship idols, as some missionaries would have us believe. They place offerings of flowers before the shrines in almost the same spirit with which the wreaths of primroses are laid at the foot of Beaconsfield's statue, or laurel at Nelson's feet. Their candles are lighted with no more, and no less, idolatrous motive than those burning on the altars of the Church of

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England. Their lights, incense and flowers are used because they are evanescent things, object lessons in the doctrines of transience, sorrowfulness and unreality, symbols of the truth that all earthly things are subject to decay,—the truth that forms the foundation of their religion.

They take pleasure in placing images of the Buddha about their pagodas just as one loves to display portraits of a hero or a dear friend about one's home. They wish to revere the memory of a great and good Teacher who lived an utterly unselfish life and taught them a way in which to escape the sufferings of worldly existence. They do not *pray* to the image, for they know that would be useless. Firstly because they know that the statue is but a statue and nothing more, and secondly because they learn, almost as soon as they learn anything, that the Laws of Nature are unalterable, that cause and effect follow each other with unceasing, unswerving regularity, that, as another Eastern philosophy teaches,

> The Moving Finger writes and having writ
> Moves on : nor all thy Piety nor wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all they Tears wash out a Word of it.

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What they are saying, as they kneel with folded hands before a shrine, is probably this:—

> Okasa, Okasa, Okasa! I take refuge in the Three Most Precious Things! Never, either by Thought or Word or Act may I bring harm to any living thing, nor steal, commit impurity, nor lie. Whatever wrong I do may I be pardoned by the Sacred Three:—The Jewel of the Buddha, the Jewel of the Law, the Jewel of the Order of the Yellow Robe!

or it may be that they are meditating on the flowers they hold in their hands and murmuring to themselves reflections, such as:—

> These flowers I offer are now sweet-scented, beautiful in colour and of a perfect form. Too soon alas! will they have faded, ill of scent, and hideous in decay. In like manner, also, am I subject to transition, to disease, decay, old age and death; wherefore is it meet that I should seize upon the moment ere it flies.

or repeating appropriate verses from the Dhammapada. For instance:—

> As the jasmine shakes off the blossoms that have withered, so should ye my disciples throw far from you desire and hate,

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or again,

> Just as a lily springs up sweet-scented and delightful from a deserted rubbish-heap, so does a disciple of the Buddha, by his knowledge, shine out amongst the ignorant and debased.

And these people are 'idol-worshippers,' 'heathen,' vile, ignorant creatures who beseech their 'gods' of brass and alabaster to answer their prayers!

Even the most benighted jungle-folk, though they have many strange practices and beliefs, are not *idol*-worshippers.

A Buddist may kneel before an image, but he no more worships it than a Christian worships the *bed* beside which he kneels to say his daily prayers.

Perhaps some Burman who visits England will go back to his own country and describe our public monuments as "gods," our museums as "temples", our scarecrows as "fetishes" which we erect in our fields to attract or keep off the rain. It would be justice, sheer, simple, and complete, a perfect repayment for our blundering misconception of the noble religion of a noble race.

> "To shun all vice, to practise all virtue, to purify one's heart,—this is the religion of the Buddhas."
>
> Dhammapada 183

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and we are constantly sending out men and money to try and turn them away from this religion—men who are needed to fight against the dirt, disease, crime, intemperance and ignorance in the slums of all our large cities, and money which might save many poor wretches of our own race from starvation and despair.

If we send missionaries at all, they should be *Buddhist* missionaries, men who would clear away the superstitions that have grown round the religion in the course of the ages, and leave the Good Law as it stood when Gaudama Buddha first proclaimed it to the world.

Soon after passing the grotesque monument referred to, we come to a little, bright, green village which marks the end of the Creek, and, turning to the left, enter the Rangoon river and proceed towards the harbour, until the Pegu River is reached. Here Flat 86 has to be berthed. This operation appears to me the most marvellous of any that take place on the river. With a strong

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current against us we have to creep alongside another flat so near that a line can be thrown across and made fast; we have to avoid crashing into the stern of the flat ahead of us; and guard against sagging back until our rudder comes into collision with the buoy astern. So limited is the space that it seems necessary to calculate to the turn of a float on the paddle wheels how much speed to give her. It is a case of

Dead slow!
Stop her!
Back her easy!
Stop her!

Easy ahead! until all is finished. This little piece of work is recorded in the log as "Speeds various—fifteen minutes."

Having got clear of the Pegu River, we proceed towards Rangoon with our one flat tow, and the searchlight is requisitioned in order to pick up the buoys which mark out the channel. As we near the Hastings a native can be seen waiting on a cargo flat, ready to put off in a sampan and bring the letters across to the ship. After casting off our laden oil-flat at a buoy, we get into position, well clear of the two

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other oil steamers lying there, and proceed to moor the vessel. It is a rather long and *very* noisy operation. The paying out and hauling in of ninety fathoms of chain cannot be accomplished in silence, and the sound of a donkey-engine at work playing, as it were, the accompaniment to the chanty of the crew cannot be regarded as music, unless Mc. Andrew of hymnal fame would regard it as such.

First one anchor is dropped and we back down, paying out ninety fathoms on the chain, then the other anchor is let go, and we simultaneously heave in forty-five fathoms on the first anchor, and pay out forty-five fathoms on the second anchor: This secures the ship, in such a manner, that she swings round in her own length, instead of making a wide circle as the tide turns.

At length all is finished, and once more we lie in the Rangoon River with darkness over the water and the harbour lights twinkling around. Thus the day's work—and a typical trip—is ended!

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CHAPTER XII.

A DAY ASHORE.

The first morning after arriving in Rangoon the Skipper goes to Office taking the ship's papers with him. We breakfast on board and then set out in the ship's gig for the shore. Our nearest jetty is by the Botatoung Pagoda where the British soldiers landed and so many of them fell in the Burmese war.

It is a long and hard pull for the four men who row us. One of the secunnies, a young man named Fuzala Rahman is "stroke," and he is as fully alive to the dignity and responsibility of his position as any member of a 'Varsity crew. He is an interesting study—rather a handsome youth, and a bit of a "blood" in his own way, I should imagine. His cap is set jauntily on the side of his head, and the dangling ends of ribbon are longer than any of the other men wear them. His clothes are gleaming and spotless. The pants are of the purest azure, his shirt is snowy-white, and the waist

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belt is of bright unsullied scarlet. Around his lithe brown arm, just above the elbow he wears several silver charms which serve both as an adornment and a talisman against evil. His hair is oiled and trained into a fascinating little forehead curl which would be the despair of any Mile-End butcher boy.

Indeed young Fuzala Rahman is a pleasant sight as he bends to the oar and sends the boat swinging over the tide. He does not understand English so I make admiring comments on his personal appearance to the Skipper. I discover that he has even gone to the length of perfuming himself and, as an extra strong whiff of perfume comes our way, I recognise it and mention the name, 'Kananga Water.' The secunnie hears and understands this, and, realising that we are talking about him, grins sheepishly and turns away, wriggling his body and rubbing his chin on his shoulder like the most bashful of school girls. Let us hope that he bears himself more manfully in the presence of the dark-eyed Miriam Bee whom, no doubt, he is expecting to meet.

Arrived at the jetty the Skipper gives his

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orders to the men and we leave the gig and enter a ticca-gharry which rattles up on our approach.

"Office" says the Skipper, and the gharry-wallah needs no further direction. He whips up his miserable little pony (which, by the way, is wearing a necklace of large blue beads) and away we clatter with the faithful purri-wallah hanging on for dear life behind.

It is about 11 a. m. when we reach Phayre Street, and, at that time, even on the hottest day, it presents a busy appearance. Gharries and motors of every description are constantly passing up and down, while others are drawn up in the scanty little patches of shade under the trees waiting for fares, the gharry wallah, more often than not, lying asleep in a precarious position on the roof. Outside the Flotilla offices there are at least half a dozen vehicles waiting. Commanders, Officers, Engineers, Burmese clerks, shippers, and various officials are continually passing in and out of the building, while, on the broad pathway outside, are squatted a dozen or so Chittagonians, either members of the crew of some Flotilla vessel, or men waiting for an engagement. These latter are wearing the usual

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blue trousers and white shirt worn over the pants, but are minus the scarlet waist-cloth, thus signifying by their dress that they are on the look out for work.

As we drive up to the entrance the purri-wallah jumps down from his perch to open the door, and the Skipper alights and enters the wide, dark door-way through which one occasionally catches a glimpse of waving punkahs and busy men in shirt sleeves passing to and fro, while unceasingly through the windows comes the liquid *Chink, chink, chink* of thousands of rupees being poured out of bags on to the floor to be tested and counted by the Burmese clerks.

While the Skipper transacts his business, I wait in the gharry and watch the passers-by. A hideously deformed beggar comes crawling and shuffling along in the dust whining for alms.

Memsa.....hib ! Memsa.....hib ! drawls the voice from the roadway, and a skinny hand is lifted to the carriage window. The poor, maimed creature is really too horrible to look upon. I give a coin and with averted eyes tell him to "Jow" and the dirwan, rising from his chair by

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the door, enforces my command.

I have heard, I do not know whether it is true, that there is a regular traffic in these monstrosities, that men in India get children at a very early age and maim them, and afterwards ship them to Burma to beg in the streets, and, at the end of each day, they despoil the poor wretches of what they have gained. It must be a profitable speculation, for the native population of Rangoon, is, on the whole, very generous. I have been in the Surati Bazaar while a long stream of beggars passed through, and each one received at least a pice from every Mahommedan stall holder.

The beggars are most importunate. They seem to take an unholy pride in exhibiting their wretchedness. It is a pity that such revolting spectacles should be allowed in the streets of Rangoon.

Apart from these sights, there is much that is interesting and picturesque to be seen as one sits waiting in the gharry. Within ten minutes, representatives of as many different races pass by the window. Grave Parsee gentlemen in grey frock coats and shiny black hats (like coal scuttles set on end) stroll

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along engaged in solemn conversation, portly and dignified Burmans rustle by in magnificent silk "pasos." Chinese carpenters, native chuprassis, Singhalese box-wallahs Madrassi bearers, Sikh policeman, Armenians, Jews, Telagus, Punjabis and Pathans are all hurrying to and fro intent on their work. One soon learns to distinguish these by their dress, but in the case of Europeans one has to depend on hearing passing scraps of conversation in order to decide their nationality. A "Tommy" goes by airing his undiluted Cockney which somehow sounds even pleasant in Rangoon. Then there are Scotch and Scotch and more Scotch still. Several Germans, Italians, Russians, Dutchmen, Danes and members of most of the other European races have business to transact in the region of Merchant and Phayre Streets during the course of the morning. Last come the Irishmen, and, not least among them, one particularly busy man, who seems to be always in a frantic hurry as he dashes out of one office into another, and yet finds time for merry greetings and a little bit of Irish blarney to numerous friends and acquaintances on the

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way. Long may he live! Phayre street would be a howling wilderness without him.

It grows very hot in the gharry after remaining for nearly an hour in one place. The varnish begins to blister and the air is stifling. My interest in outside affairs flags, as a bad sun headache grows in intensity, but suddenly it is stung to life again by a resounding crash. Thinking that two gharries have collided I look out of the window. Then I see what has happened. A scaffolding, on which two men were sitting painting near the roof of one of the offices, has given way, and the men have been flung to the ground. A crowd gathers, and I see no more, but I cannot shut out from my ears the shrieks of one of the victims, the last tortured cries of a dying man. My gharry-wallah goes to see, and comes back, with his face wreathed in smiles, and tells me that one of the men is dead. Nothing is done till an European 'Burra Sahib' comes along and takes charge of affairs. Then coolies are called to carry away the dead man, since no one else will touch him, and the other one, seriously wounded, is bundled into a ticca-gharry, and jolted away,

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screaming in agony, to the General Hospital. One wonders why there is no ambulance near, as accidents so frequently happen in the crowded parts of the city. At the best of times a ticca-gharry is the most uncomfortable means of progression known, and to a poor, injured wretch it must be anguish unspeakable. Apart from that, one does not like the idea of using the same gharry, perhaps less than an hour afterwards. One never knows whether or not the last occupant has been some half-naked native, wounded, diseased, perhaps dying, being conveyed to the nearest hospital.

This little incident closed, I return to a renewed realisation of heat and discomfort. At last the Skipper appears, and is hailed with joy and relief. As he is about to step into the gharry he meets the Commander of the "Pekin." Greetings are exchanged and then the Skipper says.

"Look here! What do you mean by passing me after we left Prome? We can't work day *and* night—at least I can't."

"Oh! don't imagine that I make a practice of that sort of thing," is the answer. "I want as much sleep as anyone else, but I was

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making extra running then for the sake of my chief engineer. He got a telegram at Prome saying that his wife was ill, and he was in a fever of anxiety till he reached Rangoon.

"How is she now?" the Skipper asks.

"She's going on fairly well now. But it was touch and go. He got there just in time."

"Oh, so bad as that? Hard lines! Well I must go now. See you later!" and the Skipper jumps into the gharry and slams the door.

It is at moments like this, when one is suddenly reminded of sickness or death near at hand, that a feeling of exile comes over one, a mad longing to escape, to struggle against the fetters that bind one down to the soil of a foreign land, to do anything—*anything*—rather than live away from the dear, clean home country. While one is in comparatively good health one can endure all the hardships, but one dare not think of an illness in this country, where the ordinary pain and discomfort are intensified a thousand times by heat and mosquitoes. And then if death comes—after all, it really does not matter

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where, or how, one is buried, but one prefers to think that it will not be in the dismal Rangoon cemetery, where, for five months in the year, the graves are sodden in the teeming rains, and the coffin has, perhaps, to be lowered into two feet or more of muddy water.

However, we will not dwell on the subject. The East has its compensations—but not many!

The gharry-wallah is waiting, meanwhile, for orders.

"*Seeda jow!*" (Drive straight on) says the Skipper, and, after we have proceeded about twenty yards, he calls a halt. Like the majority of Anglo-Burmans, he has grown too lazy to walk even the short distance from one building in the street to the next door but one, so we drive from the Flotilla offices to those of Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son, where the Skipper hands over what money he has, into safe keeping. We have discovered from bitter experience that money, in Rangoon, melts away as quickly as ice does, and that thieves are almost as numerous as human beings in Burma.

After this there is shopping to do, and then we drive on to a certain little book-shop not

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far away which is much patronised by the shipping fraternity, who usually 'fetch up' there, some time while they are ashore, to squander their money on light literature and have a chat with the cheerful little Scotch-woman, who knows just what to recommend to each particular taste.

We make some purchases, wherewith to beguile the tedium of another trip on the river, and then, as the tide is still running up, proceed to the Strand Hotel for tiffin. It is very pleasant there, away from the heat and glare, sitting under the punkahs with a lump of ice tinkling in the long glass by one's side.

There are still a few belated tourists staying there, waiting for the homeward-bound steamer. There are unmistakeably Americans, and their wide sun-helmets with long gauze veils hanging down behind, their cameras, blue goggles and umbrellas look very serious and business like. All tourists in Rangoon exhibit one strange peculiarity,—they *live* in their topees. Even at dinner, long after the sun has gone down, they may be seen seated at the tables still wearing them. From 6 a. m. to 10 p. m. they and their headgear seem to be

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inseparable. One wonders sometimes whether they trouble to remove it at night. We, who live in the tropics, have learnt to our dismay the disastrous effect the constant wearing of topees has on one's supply of hair, and are only too glad to take off the heavy, cumbersome things whenever an opportunity occurs, so, naturally, we look with amazement on those who so persistently hug their chains.

When tiffin is over we take possession of two comfortable chairs on the verandah and wait until the tide serves for returning to the ship. It is too hot to try to return against the current, and risk the possiblity of sitting, for perhaps two hours, in an open sampan with no protection against the burning heat; but the time passes pleasantly, chatting with old friends and new acquaintances who are living in the hotel.

Eventually we arrive on board the ship in time for tea.

There is some sort of "show" on at the Jubilee Hall in the evening, and one of the other Commanders comes on board to try and persuade us to go with him and see it, but we are much too tired to venture on the

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long journey to and fro again, so the plan falls through, and we remain on board to a quiet dinner by the light of dismal oil-lamps. There is no electric light while we are in port, because there is no steam up to work the dynamos. The other man stays with us and helps to dispel some of the gloom, and, by and by, he and the Skipper become enthusiastically reminiscent over escapades shared together in San Francisco, Callao and Tacoma in the old apprenticeship days many years back. I sit quietly and listen, and learn many things.

Our orders are to sail again to-morrow, so the brief spell of rest and change comes quickly to an end, but I, for one, am not sorry to leave Rangoon behind, and turn out towards the broad river once more.

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CHAPTER XIII

AN EVENING AT KYOUKYAI.

Though the usual trip for an oil boat is to Nyounghla and back, we sometimes get a little variety. Occasionally there is cargo to discharge at some little village above Nyounghla, or there are bags of ground-nuts or beans to be loaded at Thingin.

One afternoon in May, we arrive at Kyoukyai with a cargo of iron pipes to be discharged. The day has been hot, but there is a promise of coolness in the air, and the prospect ashore looks inviting. On board there is nothing but dust and heat, noise and confusion. Gangs of perspiring coolies are chanting an irritating strain as they roll the clattering pipes along the iron deck of the flat. The Chief Officer and Serang are shouting orders, the engineers are hammering at a damaged float in the wheel, and steam is hissing away both fore and aft. So we decide to go ashore for a stroll.

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A choking, blinding scramble, ankle-deep in yellow sand, brings us to the top of the bank, and into an entirely new world.

Here there is a cool breeze, and the noises of the ship are too distant and indistinct to be annoying. For a moment we turn and look back on the river and see the blue, gleaming stretches of the Irrawaddy against a background of liquid gold, for the setting sun is tingeing the skies to the westward. Then peaceful murmurs, tinkling bells and the far-away laugh and chatter of happy children entice us further inland.

Through a primitive gateway in a strong thorn stockade we enter the village. A little girl of about ten years comes sedately round a corner, sees us, and, evidently frightened, though scorning to appear so, turns leisurely and goes back again. The village seems to be deserted, except for the quiet little cows, so curiously like Alderneys, that gaze at us from a stockyard on one side of the sandy road.

Then the dogs begin to notice us. Hundreds of them wake to life, and greet us with yelps and barks and half-threatening onrushes, but the children, who appear almost

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simultaneously, silence them, and then stare solemnly at us, as we pass by. Mothers with little naked babies on their hips peep out from the doors of their mat houses, and grey haired, dim-eyed, old grandmothers are called from within to come and look also.

Unheeding, we make for the pagoda, guided by its golden "hti" and the whispered music of tiny bells. We pass through a narrow gap in a grey stone wall, and enter the enclosure, wherein are all the sacred buildings. Here all is calm and beauty and "the peace of utter light and silence." A white stone pavement is beneath our feet, and quiet shrines are all around. The carvings with which they are decorated are wonderfully beautiful. No place seems too mean for the display of loving skill. Delicate traceries, scrolls, and foliage ornament the capitals of pillars and hang in festoons from the roofs like "petrified lace-work." Within deep recesses, repose huge, calm figures of the Great Teacher, seated as he was when he attained enlightenment, with an expression of ineffable pity in the quiet eyes and on the close, silent lips. Here, in the dim light of the shrines, is pure, cold alabaster, here is cunning work in

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brass and stone and wood, here are gold and silver given with unselfish hands, and here are bright, sweet jungle-flowers that the little children bring.

Still, we turn to leave, for the golden light is concentrating, and the spiky tops of the distant, sparsely-wooded hills are silhouetted against its glow. Soon the darkness will be upon us.

We pass out, on the opposite side of the enclosure, through another of those quaint, little gateways, and go down toward the village, passing on our way the Hpongyi Kyoung, which is at once the home of the priests and a school for the boys of the village—for the priests are the teachers too. It is not a very substantial building, merely a platform raised on piles above the ground, and surmounted by a wide-spreading, shady roof supported by pillars. The walls are of very little account. They consist chiefly of strips of bamboo matting, between the wide spaces, which serve as doors and windows. There is no sign of life here, except that a group of timid calves can be seen underneath the building.

Further on, we come to the houses again,

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and we nod and smile at a merry Burmese baby-boy, whose head is shaved so that only a black tuft of hair on the forehead remains. The Mother laughs, and, coming forward, displays him with great pride. We duly admire the baby, and also his clothing, which consists of a string of coins round his neck.

Then we turn to watch a young girl, who is husking paddy in the compound. The machine she works is a queer arrangement. A long and heavy plank of wood is balanced like a see-saw, except that one arm is shorter than the other. The long arm acts as a sort of hammer. A hole is dug in the ground, immediately underneath the end of it, and the grains of paddy (rice) are poured in. The girl stands at the end of the other arm, and, holding on to a fixed bar of wood, works the see-saw with her foot, letting the hammer fall down into the hole, amongst the paddy.

Because *we* are looking on, quite a number of people gather round and look on too, though it is an every-day sight to them. The girl stops, and invites the Skipper, by a gesture, to continue the work. This he does,

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to the great amusement of everyone, especially when he clumsily misses his foothold, and lets the log swing up and catch his knee. He does this purposely, and hops away with an agonised expression, holding the injured knee in both his hands. This causes peals of laughter. It is not difficult to make a Burman laugh, and, when he does, he does it heartily.

When we go on we are followed by all the children in the village—a quiet subdued little crowd, all eyes and ears, but evidently hoping for more fun.

Back once more aboard the ship, we amuse ourselves by throwing pice amongst the youngsters, and watching them delving and scrambling in the loose sand to find them. There is a plenty of excitement, but no snatching or fighting. The elder ones see that the babes get fair play.

Then a bright idea occurs to the Skipper. He sends for a tin of cigarettes, and, ranging the children in line along the sands, gives them one each. (A huge cheroot would have been more acceptable of course, but we give according to our means). Then selecting the youngest, a chubby little boy

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of about three years old, he stoops down and gives him a light from his own cigarette. It is a strange sight, the big Englishman bending almost double to reach the sturdy little mite, who hold his gift between dimpled fingers, and lights it with practised ease, but it does not appear strange to the Burman, who smokes from babyhood in this land of good and cheap tobacco.

And now dim figures appear at the top of the bank calling to the children on the sands, "*Mah Chit! Bah Hline! lah, myan-myan lah!*"

Bah Hline, the little fellow with the lighted cigarette, calls back that he doesn't want to come. He is not hungry, he is not sleepy, he doesn't want to go to bed, he wants to stay by the big "*thinbaw*" and see what the "*Thakin*" is going to do next.

However, he goes, for darkness comes, bringing with it mutterings of thunder and vivid flares of lightning. The children are all safely gathered to their homes; the village gates are shut; the watchman mounts to his platform by the entrance; and we say farewell to the peaceful scene, pagoda, houses and hills, for tomorrow, at sunrise, we depart.

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CHAPTER XIV.

The Crew.

The crew deserve a chapter to themselves. They are natives of Chittagong, which is a country at the north-eastern corner of the Bay of Bengal.

Apart from those who go out to earn their living as sailors, the Chittagonians seem to spend most of their time rearing fowls, and exporting bad eggs. Constant association with this domesticated bird has left its imprint on the race. One has only to look at the face of an aged Chittagonian to perceive this, to listen to the tones of his voice when rage overpowers him, and mark his strutting, ruffling airs when he assumes authority. To be strictly just, the faces of some of them are occasionally eagle-like in contour, but the majority, as age advances, show a striking and unmistakeable resemblance to the common, barnyard fowl.

There is a tradition that the Chittagonians are descended from Arabian pirates who, in

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ancient times, founded a colony in the country. Their language, I believe, is a corrupt form of Arabic, but, on board, they speak a variation of Hindustani, which is known as Lascari Bat.

They are very unlike the Burmans in looks and character, but are equally unlike the natives of India from the other side of the Bay of Bengal.

There are a very clannish people. Sometimes, nearly all the able-bodied men from one village come to Burma to obtain employment, and, whenever possible, they try to keep all together on one ship. This, occasionally, leads to awkwardness or confusion. The head man of the crew is called the Serang, and, when he, for any reason, is dismissed or transferred to another ship, the whole of the crew usually follow him. If there is friction between the Captain and the crew over any real or fancied grievance, the Serang may, and probably *will*, leave the ship, when she is on the point of sailing, and take all his men along with him.

Next in rank to the Serang comes the Tindal, whose chief duty, as far as I have been able to observe, is to stand aft on a flat,

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when we meet another ship at a corner or bend in the river, and wave his arms when we *don't* collide. The two helmsmen are called Secunnies. Theirs is one of the most responsible positions on board. In their hands, at many times, lie the reputation of the Captain and the safety of the ship. Wilful misinterpretation of an order—the turn of a spoke more or less—might mean the wreck of the ship and the ruin of its commander.

A Secunnie has three stages of existence. Formerly he was a purri-wallah who rang the telegraph, acted as messenger boy, and followed the Captain about, like a shadow, ready to execute any command. In the future he aspires to be a Serang, the proud possessor of a silver whistle, with which to direct the actions of the rest of the crew.

These men, with the donkey-wallah and the Serang of the Ag-wallahs, (firemen) are all that show any sign of intelligence. The others are, apparently, just brute beasts, who are hustled and driven about in herds, doing always the most stupid things that dawn on their vacant minds. Watch them holy-stoning the decks. They squat down on their

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haunches in rows along the deck, and *slither* a tiny piece of holystone gently up and down over about four inches of the space in front of them. They never vary the rate, or intensity, or scope of the action, and they are, apparently, content to go on doing this for ever. I believe they *would*, if the Serang did not give the word to move on, at which they all grunt in unison, shuffle forward about a foot's space, and resume the same process apathetically. A good, strong charwoman would do the work in half the time, and twice as thoroughly, as these twenty Lascars do it.

They pursue the same lazy methods in all their work. When they are painting ship they divide into pairs. One man stands and holds the paint-pot while the other dabs on the paint. This is an immemorial custom and they are incapable of doing otherwise.

For sheer foolishness, they are hard to beat. As an illustration—one man, when sent ashore to clear away the overhanging branches from a narrow, delta creek, calmly sat on a branch and hacked away at it, between himself and the trunk of the tree, until the branch carried away, and he, and it,

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pitched headlong into the river. Perhaps it is that Chittagonians have some remote kinship with the Irish. Their brains seem to work on the same lines. However, we must try to do justice to our "poor, brown brothers." Let us turn from this painful picture and study some of their good qualities.

The leadsmen, for instance. They are an extremely obliging class of men. They know that the Captain's dream of happiness is to be always in "teen barm millah nay," so they kindly sing out that cry at regular intervals. They do not trouble to heave the lead. That would be foolish and unnecessary work, and might leave them with a lie on their consciences. It is far better, they think, to drone the same monotonous phrase and trust to luck that it is correct. They know that the Captain becomes alert and anxious when he is in shallow water, so they try to preserve his peace of mind, at any price, and, when the ship suddenly jams her nose into a submerged sandbank, they look aggrieved, as if the Powers of Earth had conspired against them to defeat a good intention.

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Then too, the helmsmen of the flats,—they work on a somewhat similar principle It may be expressed in a, more or less, logical syllogism :—

The Captain wishes for a perpetually stright channel.

We will act as if it were a straight channel.

Therefore it *will* be straight channel.

So they put lashings on the wheel, to save themselves the trouble of holding it steady, and stand idly by.

Practice, however, upsets this theory: The channel takes a sudden turn. The flats' helms are called for and cannot be used. Disaster follows, and then, in their turn, the helmsmen are aggrieved that their kind wishes for the Captain's welfare should bear such ill fruit.

The secunnies also, especially the young and vigorous ones, are very earnest men and very keen about their work. So earnest are they, and so keen, that they consider it a crime to stand still for one moment. Consequently, they twirl the wheel round and round and round, and untwirl it back and back again, with untiring and ferocious zeal, until the

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steering-gear becomes red hot, and the ship leaves a foaming wake behind her, like the convolutions of a sea-serpent. *They* are the most aggrieved persons of all when the Captain mildly checks their zeal.

I shall never forget the face of one young secunnie, who was rebuked in a humiliating fashion, after sending us zig-zagging up the river like a sailing-yacht against a head-wind. The Skipper saw that there was a stretch of clear water ahead, so he said to the purri-wallah,

"*Bawarchi bolao*" (Call the cook).

The cook came along, and the Skipper told him to take the wheel and hold it steady. This he did, and the ship ploughed forward on a straight course. The shamed and disgraced secunnie stood by, digging his knuckles into his eyes, and blubbering aloud. But he learned his lesson, and that was the main thing.

As with Chinamen, so with Chittagonians,—on first acquaintance their features all seem exactly alike. But, on closer inspection, the illusion vanishes and wide diversity appears. My first opportunity of observing the crew "*en masse*" and in detail occurred at the

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feast of the Muharram. The Skipper and I were seated on the for'd deck after the day's work was over, and the ship was anchored for the night, when the Serang came forward, and, with broad smiles, intimated that the crew wished to make salaams, if the Captain Sahib would give his consent. Permission was granted, so the Serang went below, and returned, marshalling the men in line, in order of rank, into our presence.

They were all in their best and cleanest uniforms, and did not look such a ruffianly lot as they usually do. They wore blue cotton pants, very tight round the ankles, over these a white garment of about knee-length, and a belt of Turkey red cotton tied loosely round the hips. Their round, white caps were banded with black ribbon bearing the Flotilla badge.

Each man in turn, at a nod from the Serang, came forward and salaamed profoundly, first to the Skipper, and then to me. I do not know how the Skipper acknowledged this. I feared for my gravity, should I catch his glance, so, to each of the thirty men who doubled up before me, I gave, what I hoped, was a grave inclination of the head. It is

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rather a difficult matter to bow when one is in a hammock chair. I wisely forebore the attempt.

At the end of the proceedings, the Skipper granted them all a holiday on the next day—the gaining of which was probably the object of their demonstration.

They spent the greater part of the holiday, as most Mohammedans do, in religious exercises. All the crew, except those who were absolutely required for the running of the ship, gathered together on the after deck, with their faces turned towards Mecca. The Khalifa (barber) conducted the service, and, for upwards of an hour, they all prayed devoutly, standing, kneeling, and prostrating themselves at intervals, with almost as much precision as a squad of soldiers drilling.

Sometimes they prayed silently, sometimes they murmured indistinctly, and sometimes they repeated in unison that first chapter of the Koran, which they use and reverence, as the Christians do the Lord's prayer.

> Praise be to God the Lord of all creatures; the most merciful, the King of the day of Judgment. Thee do we worship and of thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right

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way, in the way of those to whom thou hast been gracious, not of those against whom thou art incensed nor of those who go astray.

It may sound heathenish babble to those who cannot interpret the language, but not to one who understands the words. They are praying to the same God to whom the Christians pray, and their particular form of religion has a strong, and, for the most part, good influence on their lives.

They are most strict in their observance of the month of Ramadan, the Mohammedan Lent. During the whole of this time, they do not eat a particle of food between sunrise and sunset of each day. If they could alter their daily routine, and sleep all day, and do the work at night time, when meals are permitted, this would not be such great hardship, but, on board, the crew have to do the ordinary work of the ship as usual. One cannot help pitying them, for, by the end of the day, their drawn faces and sunken eyes show how the strain tells on them. In spite of this, there is much that makes for good in this prolonged fast. It means rigid self-denial, and that cannot be practised for any length of time without strengthening, to

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some extent, the forces of character.

Mohammedanism also enjoins strict personal cleanliness. Bathing is a religious rite, and it meets with due observance, though the method on board is rather primitive. Standing on deck, the men divest themselves of their upper garments, sluice down with two or three bucketfuls of water drawn up from the river, and then go below to change into clean clothing. After the ship has anchored, there are always numbers of the crew standing on the after-deck bathing. It is rather difficult to understand how their quarters in the hold get into the state they do, after all this parade of cleanliness. It is always advisable to turn everything out of the crew's quarters, at periodic intervals, and cleanse the walls and flooring with a jet of steam.

Total abstinence from alcohol is another tenet of Mohammedanism; and these people, like the Jews, are forbidden to eat the flesh of the pig. One can understand that the latter rule is very necessary in Eastern countries, where pigs roam at large about the streets and feed on whatever refuse they can find.

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Mohammedans also are forbidden to put their money out to usury. This command must be a great trial to Chittagonians, whose ruling passion is avarice, though even that is excusable, when one understands that they are scraping together every available pice in order to get back to their own country, where their mothers, wives, and children are awaiting them.

It is rather strange that, though they will not put their money out to interest, they do not hesitate to steal.

One evening the Skipper's watch disappeared from the nail on which it always hung during working hours. For nearly a week it could not be found. At first suspicion fell on the saloon staff, but, after a time, it seemed certain that one of the crew was the culprit. The Serang questioned and threatened in vain. At last he decided to make each one of the crew swear on the Koran that he had not the watch in his possession. No one admitted the theft, but, when the Skipper returned to his cabin, he found the watch lying on the centre of the table.

These men who will steal, and even com-

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mit murder on occasion, dare not tell a lie on the Koran. It is well that there is something that has a hold over them, because deceit and cunning are their natural processes of thought. It is almost impossible to fathom the motives for any one of their actions. Certainly it cannot be done by questioning. It needs many years of close acquaintance with them before an European can begin to understand the subtle working of the Oriental mind. Flotilla men say that if a Chittagonian has a grudge against any particular man—the Captain, for instance,—he will lie down and die "for spite." Then, when he is dead, his messmates will bring a charge of assault against the Commander, a charge false from beginning to end, and soon detected as such, but they do not mind, so long as they can cause him trouble and inconvenience. And, somewhere, hovering near, I suppose, is the shade of the deceased Chittagonian rejoicing in his victim's discomfiture.

It is not unheard of for a man who has got into trouble to jump overboard and disappear for a time from all human ken. It is not likely that such a strong swimmer

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would be drowned. He is probably lying "perdu" in his own country, till the hue and cry is over. Meanwhile the rest of the crew can spread the report that the Captain knocked him overboard, and caused his death. Then it is a case of one man's word against another's. Whoever swears hardest and most convincingly wins the day, but, in any case, it means loss of time and money to the Commander.

One marked peculiarity of the crew is their strange aversion from giving notice. If one of them wants to leave, he either runs away, and so forfeits at least a fortnight's pay, or, with the help of a confederate, he adopts a subtler plan.

One day a telegram arrives for him, and he comes forward, with tears raining down his cheeks, and hands it to the Skipper. The Skipper opens it and reads:—

"*Mother ill please come*"

He has read scores of similar telegrams before, so he tells the man to "*jow!*" and get on with his work.

Next day another telegram arrives.

'*Mother dying come immediately*'

The man sobs aloud in terrible grief, as

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he hands this up for inspection, but he gets the same answer as before.

Shortly afterwards a third telegram, somewhat in this style is received.

"*Mother dead wife dying house burnt down come instantly.*"

(Telegrams can be sent for four annas each in Burma). That settles it. The very piling on of the agony makes the Skipper suspect that it is all false, but what can he do? The man has evidently some urgent reason for going, and go he must, however inconvenient it may be to spare him at the time. So, after the advent of the third or fourth telegram, his persistence is at last rewarded, and he gets the leave, for which he has been scheming so long.

He *may* go home, or he may be met with next day, at work on another steamer, but one thing is certain, he will never, never as long as there is a drop of Chittagonian blood in his body, give the true reason for wishing to go.

Another of their little peculiarities is their childish behaviour when spoken to. All orders are usually conveyed to the crew by the Serang, but, if one of the ordinary jungle-

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wallahs is spoken to personally by the Captain, he is completely overwhelmed.

One day the Skipper was entering their names in the pay-book. He had the men ranged before him, and they gave their names and departed. The Serang came first, "Abdul Aziz," then the Tindal and secunnies and the rest of the crew in order, "Mahommed Ally," "Abdul Ahmed" "Fuzala Rahman," "Romally" and so on. At the end of the list came two new recruits.

"Your name?" said the Skipper, looking up at one of them. He shrank back, glanced at his companion, twisted his fingers together, and gave a spasmodic grin.

"*Tumhara nam kia hi?*" again the Skipper asked.

The man hung his head, wriggled his body and shuffled his feet uneasily, but could not say a word. He needed but the corner of an apron to bite to complete the picture of embarrassment.

"Ask him what his name is Serang" said the Skipper, growing impatient. After much persuasion, the bashful youth at length blurted out something inarticulate.

"*Bamboo?*" repeated the Skipper, catch-

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ing at the sound. But this was apparently screamingly funny, too funny for words. In spite of his fear, the youth gave way to nervous but irrepressible giggles, and nothing more could be obtained from him, by coaxing, or threats, or any other means.

The second youth behaved just as foolishly. Nothing would induce him to say his name clearly. The sound he mumbled was more like "Cucumber" than anything else, so, in despair, the Skipper duly entered the names of the two new men in the paybook as "Bamboo" and "Cucumber."

In addition to the Lascar crew, there is the galley-staff on board. At the head of this department is the butler. He may be a Madrassi, or a Goanese, or any of ten other races, but his underlings are always of the same nationality. He brings along with him two cooks, a Masalchi to wash the dishes, two Ramsawmys or sweeper-men, (the lowest caste men on board) and a saloon boy. When he goes, his staff go too.

On an oil-boat the butler is not a fixed quantity. He varies—often. There are no passengers, and he cannot make the profits his soul longs for, except by absconding,

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every now and then, in everyone's debt, and leaving the Skipper to pay the piper.

Of course there are butlers, *and* butlers. Some of them are absolute treasures, but this variety is only to be found on the mail or cargo-steamers,—never on an oil-boat. Lucky is the commander who can get "Jumbo" (so named because of his elephantine proportions) or one of his numerous well-trained relatives to undertake the messing of the ship. "Jumbo" is an institution. He is almost as well known in Further India as is the immortal Gunga Din in India proper. One can walk on board, half an hour before dinner, and say to him, without any qualms.

"Jumbo there will be six extra to dinner to-night."

"Very good sir!" says he, and disappears below.

Punctually to the minute the dinner is served—plenty for everybody, and everything done to perfection. Jumbo, the incarnation of corpulent dignity, stands silently by to see that all goes well. Only one thing can upset his composure. Point to the ground in front of his feet and say suddenly, "Jumbo,

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there's a frog!" and he starts to life, clutches his draperies around him, and flies howling away.

When this little eccentricity of his was demonstrated to me, I felt "wondrous kind" toward Jumbo.

The list of the crew is not complete without mention of the Captain's boy. His duties are to polish the Captain's brass buttons, to sew his trouser-buttons on with cobweb thread, to bodge up the holes in his socks with the thickest yarn he can find, to fasten his boots, to coax the stud through a stiff-necked collar, to give orders for the Captain's bath, and to superintend his clothes and report when new ones are needed—in short, to play the part of valet and general factotum.

On the boy, very often, depends the general "tone" of the ship. If the Skipper wishes to dress in a hurry and finds his cabin in confusion, his clothing neglected, buttons missing, socks holed, collars gone astray, it is only natural that he will go round afterwards paying out trouble to everyone on board.

The "boy",—[illegible] more often than not

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is a "man" with the cares of a family on his shoulders—is usually a Madrassi, but the Skipper was fortunate enough to have a Burman servant, a handsome, dignified, impassive youth of about twenty-two years.

How shall I describe him? Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like—Hpo Kine. (His real name was Hpo Koon, but someone had perversely changed it to Hpo Kine, for no reason at all, apparently, except that it rhymed with Ko-kine—where the Lakes are.) He wore, first of all, a snow-white vest of Indian gauze which was always perfectly whole and clean. He affected identically the same style as the Skipper, and chose the best one he could find to wear himself. When the joint stock began to run low, he always put out the torn and ragged ones for the Skipper to wear, and then, when complaint was made, he would say meekly,

"I think so sir, master wanting new banians. Can get Rowe Company's sir, twelve annas each," and the Skipper, falling into the trap, gave him money and commissioned him to buy a new outfit the next time he went ashore.

Hpo Kine's lungyi was of rich, hand-woven

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silk, which rustled with every movement. Bronze, crimson, and pink were the colours he most affected. His stiffly-starched linen jacket was always snowy-white, and he wore round his head a pink, silk gaung-baung of glistening purity.

When he walked abroad, black socks and brown brogues completed his costume, with sometimes a grey flannel jacket in the cold weather. He disdained to carry a parcel. He was far too superior a person to do anything so menial. If he were sent to take the Skipper's bag from the office to the Club, he would employ a coolie to do it, and march on in front with a lordly air.

On board, he sported a hammock chair of his own, and would not dream of squatting down on the deck in ordinary Burmese fashion. He smoked the most expensive cigarettes and cheroots, and altogether "did himself well." Every one mistook him for a Myook, at least. It was an honour to belong to such a servant, though it is quite probable that the Skipper paid in many little ways for that honour. No one could reasonably expect Hpo Kine to keep up such display at his own expense. No doubt,

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he also levied toll on the small fry of the ship's company. They courted his patronage as people do that of a King's favourite.

Nevertheless he was a good servant, and a genius at removals. Transfer from one ship to another, at an hour's notice, meant no discomforts, with Hpo Kine to manage affairs. The whole business was completed, and everything left ship-shape, as if by magic. What English servant at Rs. 12 a month could be expected to pack everything in a house (without any previous warning) engage coolies and carts, transport everything to another house, and unpack and rearrange in exactly the same order, even to the trinkets on a dressing-table, within the space of twelve hours? Yet, to my knowledge, Hpo Kine could do, and *did* do it.

Unfortunately, he had one big fault, a fault common to the dandies and exquisites of all nations. He loved the ladies. And the ladies—the dainty, little Burmese girls—loved him. One day he came to the conclusion that life on board an oil-boat was far too solitary an existence, so he took his departure,—though this was not the

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reason he gave for going.

He never confessed to having more than two wives—"Only two, sir!" he said, with a grin, when questioned,—but—"*I hae me doots.*"

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PART II.

VARIED EXPERIENCES MONTH BY MONTH.

CHAPTER XV.

FOGS AND HEAT.

Having described one trip in detail, it is not my intention to give a minute and particular account of each of the others "*ad nauseam*." During the course of one year we went up to Nyounghla and back probably twenty to twenty-five times, and, though the round trip is, roughly speaking, about a thousand miles in length, one soon gets to know the river, and there is naturally a great deal of monotony in the life.

Our chief interest was the weather.

The general aspect of the river, and the particular difficulties of navigation vary very considerably with the different seasons of the year. The most unpleasant time on the river, as everywhere else in Burma, is the hot weather, from the beginning of March

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until the rains break, and this, as it happened, was my first experience of the life afloat. I had gone on board for the first time just at the end of the cold weather and things soon began to 'warm up.' The first signs of the approaching hot season were the dense fogs in the early morning, which, many a time, caused us considerable delay. Often, with steam ordered for four a. m., we had to wait till eight, or nine, before the fog lifted and we could get away. Even then, after about only ten minutes' steaming, we sometimes ran into another little pocket of fog, which necessitated the tedious work of anchoring all over again. A continuous repetition of this process is naturally not conducive to the best of tempers, but this was not the only trial with which the Skipper had to contend. It is altogether in accordance with the general "cussedness" of things that the time when fogs are most prevalent and the water is at its lowest level, is just the time when most of the huge rafts of teak logs come floating down the river. These rafts are so unwieldy that it is almost impossible to avoid them when under way; and, when a steamer is anchored,

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and a raft drifting down towards it, the only thing to do is to sit and wait for the crash.

One morning in March, I remember, we had been waiting for three hours to leave the anchorage, but the fog still showed no signs of lifting.

(Perhaps "fog" is rather a misleading term to use. It was not a yellow, or black fog, such as one gets in London, or Manchester, but a thick, white mist through which we could see scarcely a ship's length ahead.)

On waking that morning, it was not necessary to look out of the window to see what had happened. The walls were bedewed with drops of moisture, and the bed-linen was saturated with the damp mist.

I scrambled into my limp and clammy clothes, and went outside. There everything was even damper and clammier than in the cabin, and the curtains of mist hung thick around the ship, shutting us in to a little world of our own. The air was not at all chilly, in fact, it was warmer than on an average July day at home; and the sensation of fog on a warm day was rather peculiar.

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Beyond the ship we could see nothing, but, occasionally, we heard the voices of solitary Burmans in canoes shouting to people ashore as they paddled along close to the river bank. At intervals the ship's bell clamoured out its warning to other craft.

Evidently the fog was purely local, for we could hear the hoot of a steamer's whistle as she proceeded cautiously down stream, until, running into the bank of fog that enveloped us, she too, had to turn round and anchor. It became rather exciting as she drew nearer. We could not see her, although we could hear the flap of her paddles, the tinkle of the telegraph, the splash of the anchor, and the rattle of the chain quite distinctly. I wondered whether she would run us down, or drift backwards into us, as they paid out chain on the anchor, but, fortunately, no such thing happened.

Shortly afterwards, when the fog was beginning to lift a little, I saw a large raft drifting straight down towards us. The raftsmen—four of them—were pulling vigorously at their oars, running from one side of the raft to another trying to avert the collision, but they soon perceived that it

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was inevitable, and squatted down calmly to await events.

Inside the little mat hut on the centre of the raft were seated two women, who glanced at us leisurely through the door-way, and then went on quietly smoking their cheroots.

Our men, armed with bamboos, had stationed themselves on the flats and the lower deck of the ship, ready to poke away any log which threatened to batter a hole through the plates of the hull.

The raft which, in the distance, had appeared to be drifting very slowly, seemed to gain in speed as it approached us, till it skimmed over the last few yards with the full force of the current and came at our bows with a leap.

Then came the crash, shaking the ship from stem to stern. *Crack! crack! crack!* went the lashings of the raft, and the logs piled up over each other and came slipping and smashing into our sides.

The women stood up at the moment of impact, and, judging the distance nicely, sprang at the rails of the ship and were dragged over into safety by some of the crew. It was not an easy thing to do, to spring

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from wet, rolling logs to a deck at least four feet higher, but they did it, and it was as well that they did, because the mat-house, in which they had been seated a moment before, parted in two and fell piecemeal into the river. The thatched roof floated for a time, but soon was swamped by logs piling over it, in the narrow space between steamer and flat.

The raft had struck first on the bows of our port flat, and about one third of it remained intact, floating away diamond-wise across the river. The rest was broken up into small portions of about two or three logs each, which the raftsmen, with amazing skill, began to get together. A man would sit astride a log and paddle along with his hands till he reached a larger portion of the raft. He lashed these together, and then, diving into the water with the rope in his mouth, swam out to another drifting log and repeated the process. By degrees, the raftsmen and the crew together got all the logs clear of the ship, and the women were sent away on the largest portion of the raft that was near.

It would probably [illegible] day's work to

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lash the whole of the raft together again; and this sort of thing happens, not once or twice, but, perhaps, *ten* times during the journey downstream. It is fortunate that the raft's crew are Burmans. There is no other race better fitted for that kind of work,—so calm, so cheerful, so happy go-lucky in the face of all odds.

"*Keik-sa-ma-shi bu!*" (Never mind!) says the Burman, with a philosophic grin, and he is equally ready to lie idly in the shade and smoke all day long, or to battle for his life amidst toiling logs in the river.

Three rafts, that morning, drifted down through the mists and broke up across our bows, and then the fog lifted, revealing, quite close to us, a large mail-steamer, the one we had heard hooting as she came down stream. It was really marvellous that she had not collided with us as she swung round to anchor. Her Commander must have had an anxious time, when he found himself running into a drifting bank of fog, in a narrow part of the river, with the bell of an unseen ship clanging somewhere near, and the voices of hidden boatmen shouting through the gloom. The wonder is that

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more accidents do not happen at this time of the year.

Whenever the ship was fogged it meant an enforced holiday for the Skipper, and he usually availed himself of it to make up arrears of sleep, but, occasionally, he found himself at a loss for something to do.

One morning he was standing idly gazing over the rail, waiting for the mist to clear away, when, suddenly, his attention was caught by two water-snakes swimming across the river.

"Come here! come quickly!" he sang out to me.

I ran forward and saw the snakes, about fifty yards ahead of us, passing across our bows.

"Now's your chance for a shot!" said the Skipper.

I rushed for my small Winchester rifle which lay handy, and took aim at the nearer one.

Bang!

The snake, at which I aimed, rose up about two feet out of the water, seemed to turn a sort of backward somersault, and then went on swimming. Meanwhile the

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other one had gone on undisturbed. I had evidently hit my snake but not killed it.

The Skipper snatched the rifle out of my hands and blazed away, but all he did was to plough up the water about two feet behind the creature's tail, and it continued on its way with unruffled composure. Before we could load again, both snakes were lost in the fog.

(I always tell this story with great pride, because it was the first time I had ever shot at a moving object. And I hit it!

The Skipper prefers to forget the incident; and he says that, anyway, there is only my word to go upon that *that* was the particular snake I aimed at.)

Towards the end of March the fogs ceased, and the hot weather began in earnest. I believe that it was cooler on the river than in Rangoon, but, even then, the heat was almost unbearable. I do not think that, for twelve weeks, morning noon, or night, I felt even passably, cool. It was one, long spell of discomfort, and the most unpleasant feature of it all was the constant sense of damp stickiness from excessive perspiration.

Even the mildest exertion caused the per-

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spiration to start out in beads, and roll down in streams, till it blinded one's eyes, and thoroughly soaked one's clothing. The Skipper, with his close-cropped head, escaped a great deal of discomfort, but my hair was always heavy and damp, and I felt as if I were wearing a warm, wet, velvet tea-cosey on my head all the time.

Occupation of any kind was almost impossible,—sewing because the needle rusted and stuck in the damp cloth; knitting or crochet because the work and cotton became saturated and yellow with perspiration; writing because the pen slipped, and the paper wilted, under the pressure of warm, wet hands, and reading, because it was far too exhausting to hold up the weight of even a sixpenny magazine.

All one could do in the hot weather was to lie back in a long chair, and gasp for breath, and drink long drinks, which only in creased the flow of perspiration and made one damper and stickier than ever. In order to retain a vestige of comfort, it was necessary to bathe two or three times during the day and get into a complete change of clothing each time, but the cabins

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and bathrooms were so hot, that it was doubtful whether it really repaid one to take the trouble of bathing and dressing again.

While the ship was under way, it created more or less of a breeze which, though at times like the blast from a furnace, was still better than the heavy, choking atmosphere that remained when the ship stopped. The nights in the hot weather were horrible. No words can describe them. Even though we had camp-beds put out on deck, the heat under the mosquito-nets was unbearable. The pillow was covered with damp patches wherever one's head rested on it, and one was continually employed turning it over and over again, in order to find a dry spot. After enduring the heat under the net, almost to strangulation point, I would get up and wander round the ship in search of any little draught or current of air, only to be driven back to shelter again by merciless hordes of mosquitoes.

And so the nights passed. Sometimes it was impossible to rest at all, sometimes one got a little fitful sleep in the early hours, from two to four a. m.

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The engineers, who slept aft, were usually better off than we were, because, during the hot weather, the prevailing wind is from the south, and, as we usually lay more or less north and south when anchored, they got whatever breeze there was at night. During the day time, however, their plight was far worse than ours.

I remember one day, when the thermometer registered 98° in the shade on the upper deck, the Chief Engineer ran up to speak to the Skipper. As he passed through the saloon, he shivered and pulled his coat-collar close round his throat.

"My word, it's cold here!" he said.

"Cold, why it's 98°!"

"Is it?" he answered. "I have just come from the engine-room platform. It's 120° down there."

And this was in the delta, where the damp, steamy atmosphere made the heat ten times more trying. It was like living in an overheated conservatory.

I have been in Mandalay when the temperature has been 160°F. in the sun, and found the dry heat quite bearable, but, in Rangoon, when the thermometer stands at 95°, or over, one feels quite sorry for oneself.

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Still one can get used to almost any degree of heat, in time. Men do strenuous work in Burma with very little discomfort, when, with the same temperature at home, the newspapers would tell of nothing but "heat waves," and people would be dying off, like flies, in the street.

But, although one can get accustomed, more or less, to the heat it is not so easy to adapt oneself to the short spells of cold. One begins to shiver and feel uncomfortable, long before one has any legitimate reason for doing so.

I recall an incident which illustrates this. It happened once that a party of us had gone up to Thandaung, a small hill-station not far from Rangoon, to escape the worst of the hot weather. During the daytime the pleasant coolness had been most gratifying, but, after dinner, as we sat on the verandah of the hotel, while the men smoked, the night began to grow chilly, and we adjourned, with general consent, to the dining room. But, even there, it was too cool to be comfortable, and, one by one, the doors and windows were shut to keep out draughts and chilly breezes. In

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spite of all precautions, the raw night air crept in, and, rather shamefacedly, some of us stole away to fetch an extra coat or wrap. We tried to pretend that we enjoyed the novel sensation of cold, but, after sitting for some time with chattering teeth and numbed feet, we had to admit that it was anything but pleasant. In the room there was an empty stove, towards which some of us cast lingering glances. We all longed to have a fire lighted, but no one liked to confess to such a weakness. At last one of the shivering ladies said,

"Do you think we dare ask for a fire?"

One of the men got up and strolled over to the thermometer.

"Do you know what temperature it is, you people?" he said.

"No."

"Guess?"

"Well, about 48° I suppose," said someone, "or perhaps 50°."

"*It's just 70°*!" he said, and, after that, we could not, for very shame, complain of the cold.

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CHAPTER XVI.

The Rains.

The monsoon season generally lasts from June to October, but the river begins to rise before the rains break. This is due to the melting of the snows on the mountains from which it springs. Though the Irrawaddy has never been traced back to its source, it is known that several of its tributaries rise in the snow-covered mountains of China; and it is conjectured that others have their origin in some, as yet, unexplored heights of Thibet.

As one sees the rising waters encroaching on the sun-baked sands, during the heat of a tropical day, it is difficult to realise that, a short time back, they came slipping down in thunderous avalanches from the mighty shoulder of some lonely, snowclad height, and, flowing thence in an icy stream through narrow, sunless gorges, helped to swell the volume of the main river. This accounts for the apparently strange fact that the river-water is colder towards the end of the

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hot season than at any other time of the year. It is dangerous for an European to bathe in the river at this season, just, of course, when the sensation would be most appreciated.

With the rising of the river comes an easier time for the Skipper. Going upstream with light flats, all that he has to do is to seek out the slack water close by the banks, in order to travel as quickly as possible, and keep down the fuel consumption. He steers now, straight for the sandbanks that he avoided in the low-water season, and passes safely over the top of them. He takes the keenest delight in cutting off corners and taking short cuts round the islands, along channels which are impassable at any other time of the year. He rather prides himself on being able to predict the depth of the river at any given point, and often tests himself in this respect.

"You see that point over there," he says, indicating a spot about two miles distant. "We shall get '*Sari do barm*' there." And, sure enough, when we arrive at the point, I find that he is right.

"How were you able to know that?" I

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ask. "Did the pilot tell you?"

"No *he* doesn't know anything about it, but it is very simple. Last downward trip we got "*Bee lays kum ek barm*" (just under one fathom.) Don't you remember that we scratched along the bottom? Well, the river has risen about ten feet since then. I saw that by the gauge down below. So there you are, ten and five make fifteen. Fifteen feet is "Sari do barm." It's merely a question of mental arithmetic!"

At this time of the year the pilot is usually over-cautious. He believes that "slow and steady wins the race" and, if he could have his way, he would send the ship pounding up against the full strength of the current. He is horrified when the Skipper disregards his warning and makes for the shoal water, but, while the rise continues, it is perfectly safe to do so, since we are drawing only four feet six of water.

At first, of course, the rise is only temporary. It soon subsides, if there is not fresh water from above to reinforce it. In that case, the last state is worse than the first, because the buoys which mark out the channels have been washed away from their

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positions and left lying "at buckets and brooms" all over the river. Then the Skipper has either to go poking around trying to find out the way for himself, or wait until a pilot launch comes along to give him a lead.

He may, possibly, get into another predicament. It is left to his discretion as to what draught the oil flats are to be loaded to at Nyounghla. Believing the rise to be permanent, he may order them to be loaded to five, or six, feet. Then, if the rise subsides, he will be left stranded, unable to get through the shallow channels, and the delay may be considerable. On the other hand, he may be too prudent, and bring down a light cargo, while the water continues to rise. This means loss of money both to himself and to the Company. These, however, are the difficulties of the low-water season. When the rains begin, the rise is permanent.

The breaking of the monsoons is generally accompanied by cyclonic weather. One gets a faint suggestion of what is to come during the mango-showers, which occur at the latter end of the hot season (when the mangoes ripen) and, after a short but violent

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break in the monotony, leave everywhere hotter than before.

It was in May, when a passenger on a cargo-boat, that I first experienced what a mango-shower was like. It had been an oppressive, leaden day, not a breath of air stirring—the heat was heavy, sickening, deadly. Night came, but no coolness—only mosquitoes thronging round, settling down on damp hands and faces, and biting through thin cotton clothing. The cabins were *ovens*, seething with heat; the perspiration dripped from every pore as one stepped inside.

Fortunately, I was the only saloon passenger on the ship, so I had a camp-bed placed for me on the forward deck. There I lay looking at the stars, trying to shut out the sounds from the shore, and vainly longing for sleep.

We were lying for the night alongside the bank and, in addition to the anchor cable were further secured by a wire hawser and heavy lines made fast to points ashore.

The Burmese passengers, sleepless victims, also, of the heat, were chatting in groups on the river bank, or on the after deck of the ship. Dogs barked, babies cried, women

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quarrelled. It was impossible to rest.

Suddenly it became cooler; silence fell, and I slept.

The next thing I realised was that my bed was heaving up under me, and, a moment after, I was pitched out on to the deck. I wakened to black darkness and pandemonium—the wind howling like ten thousand demons, solid rain clattering down on the iron roof, thunder crashing and rumbling, children screaming, men shouting orders, ropes snapping with loud reports, heavy canvas purdahs lashing and flapping about, and flashes of lightning, every few seconds, lighting up everything around with blinding vividness.

The wind was coming straight from the shore, otherwise I should have been blown into the river, as my bed was close to the rail. I managed to find my dressing-gown from amongst the confusion of heaped-up bedclothes, and then stood hanging on to a stanchion wondering what to do, while the wind and rain lashed against me. It seemed the wisest course to make for the saloon, so I did so, feeling my way along by the rail and the outside of the forward cabin. In

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the saloon it was absolutely dark, the most impenetrable darkness I have ever experienced, but I was protected from the force of the storm, so, sliding my hand along the wall to guide me, I ran for my cabin.

Suddenly I collided violently with a man. He howled. So did I. It was so dark that I could see nothing of him, even at such close quarters, except, occasionally, the whites of his eyes gleaming, but he shouted to me at the top of his voice, and at last I understood that he was one of the crew, who had been sent up to see if I had come to any harm. Together we felt for the door of my cabin and forced it open against the pressure of the wind, and there we found my cabin-trunk almost floating in water, and the rain thrashing in at the open windows as if fifty hose-pipes were turned on to the room. So I let the door slam to again and sat down in the saloon to await developments.

Meanwhile the Commander was fully occupied. The ship had been blown from her berth right across the river and back into the bank again with her head downstream. The flat parted and went careening

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away on an independent voyage. It seemed hours before the storm subsided and everything was righted. I think I fell asleep with my head on my arms across the saloon table. I realised nothing more till I was told that a cabin had been prepared for me on the other side of the ship, and there I had to wait, until nine o'clock next morning, before there were any clothes dry enough for me to wear.

This was really a very mild and tame experience, hardly worth recording, but, as it was my first adventure of the sort, it made an impression on my memory.

The Skipper tells tales of a cyclone in Rangoon harbour when about one hundred vessels, of various sorts and sizes, were swamped during one night; and of a gale at Bhamo, where the roof was ripped clean off the steamer, and the funnel torn out and carried a distance of two fields away. In Mandalay, too, he was aboard a ship when a sudden squall whipped up the heavy saloon table and wrapped it round a stanchion, until it snapped in two and fell away on either side. In this case, also, portions of the roof were [redacted] he, lying in

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his bunk convalescent after three weeks in Mandalay hospital, was half drowned in the terrific downpour of rain that followed. So strong was the wind, that all the iron stanchions on the ship were left leaning over, like a field of wheat in a steady breeze.

Such adventures as these have not fallen to my lot, although I have experienced it so rough, that I, (a passably good sailor) have been decidedly uncomfortable five hundred miles up the river.

As the rainy season advances the river steadily rises, till the whole aspect of the scenery is changed. Where, formerly, we steamed along between high sandy cliffs, we now are level with the summit, and can see right into the thatched houses built on the grassy margin. A little valley between the hills shows as a dry water-course, when we have risen to its level. And then one day we see what is called "the choung coming down." It is a strange sight. Down a quiet channel, where there is little or no water, comes a foaming, heaped-up wave like a tidal bore. It rushes into the river with such force that it sweeps round in a semicircle of about half a mile before

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the waters mingle together. Its course can be traced by floating debris, logs of wood, patches of thatch, household chattels, and, perhaps, a human body to tell its silent tale of tragedy.

During the rains most of the difficulties of navigation occur on the downward trip, that is with reference particularly to oil-boats, which travel upwards with empty flats and take them down loaded six feet deep, which means, if both flats are "islands," that the steamer is towing down two thousand tons of oil each trip.

The current runs down with such force and velocity that, in some places, the steamer attains to a speed of twenty miles an hour, and comes tearing round the bends like an express train. It is no trivial matter to control vessels, three hundred feet long and about one hundred and fifty feet in extreme breath (across sponsons and flats) in circumstances such as these. A ship cannot be pulled up in its own length like a motor-car, or steered like a bicycle, and yet in some cases it is necessary to be able to do both these things in order to avoid accidents. Out on the open seas, the sp[illegible]em

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very inconsiderable, but, in such a limited space, it is terrific. As the ship goes flying past the villages on the banks the sensation is thrilling; every minute is a lucky escape. A nervous and inexperienced navigator, I feel certain, would be tempted to reduce the speed at such times as these. For my own part, I should want to go "Full speed astern" and so try to counteract to some extent the force of the current. But it is just here that more power is needed. A master has no control over a ship unless she has "way" upon her, and, in order to be handled properly, she must be travelling *through* the water, not merely going along with the current. Otherwise there would be no weight of water on the rudder, and accurate steering would be out of the question.

Turning round for an anchorage, at this time of the year, always presents difficulties, because the ship has to sweep round in such a wide circle before her head is upstream, and it is useless to drop an anchor and let her swing to it, since no ordinary cable would bear the strain. If she sags down below the proper anchorage it needs tre-

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mendous power on the engines to carry her, with her two fully loaded flats, any distance upstream. Then, when the anchor is dropped, and the chain is being paid out, comes a critical time, especially on the older ships with more antiquated apparatus, where the chain is paid out in jerks, and snubbed up short by being jammed down by a lever into a hole. The "weakest link" is tested to its utmost then, and the Skipper is fortunate if it resists the strain.

All up and down the river, there are lost anchors snugging down into the river bed. Off Donabyu there are two that disappeared while I was on board. I was asleep in my cabin when the first one went, but I happened to see the second one go. I was on the upper deck, while the Skipper was below superintending the operations for the recovery of the first lost anchor, when I saw the thick, iron cable carry away, owing to the force of the current and the weight of the ship. The chain did not jerk or snap. It was simply dragged apart like a piece of darning-wool, and a valuable anchor and thirty fathoms of chain were left at the bottom of the river. There was a bamboo

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buoy attached to the anchor, which should have indicated its position, but it was pulled below the surface by the strong under-current, and kept out of sight.

It was a regrettable incident. Perhaps it could have been prevented, perhaps not. At any rate the Skipper was much chagrined that it should have happened on *his* ship, and he felt the disgrace much more than the resultant loss of commission on the earnings of the trip. I think he was a little cheered when I suggested that he was "sowing anchors to reap ships" and that he could congratulate himself that he had not sunk a a ship yet, but it was not till he had retrieved his fault by accidentally fishing up an anchor and chain, which another man had dropped, that he regained his usual spirits. As that was the second anchor that he had brought to light he began to feel quite cheerful again. In fact he said that the next thing he expected to find was his lost commission "floating down the river on a grindstone."

After all, accidents will happen, even on the best-regulated ships. Indeed it is a matter for sincere congratulation only time

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a Commander makes a successful trip, up and down the river, so many difficulties confront him at every turn.

Even after the ship is safely anchored for the night there are mishaps occasionally, especially during the rainy season. Sometimes a tremendous rise comes down, causing the anchors to drag, and the ship begins to drift downstream stern first. When there are rocks in the channel below, this is not an enviable experience for any one on board.

I remember one night of anxiety in the rains. We had anchored perhaps a thought too far out from the bank, but the Skipper had been afraid to go nearer as the current close inshore was setting upstream. After dinner he went to look at the anchor and, not feeling quite satisfied, let go the other anchor too. Still the river looked threatening so, instead of turning in, the Skipper lay in a long chair on the forward deck where he could hear every sound. Suddenly, with a rush and a swirl, another large rise came down and boiled up around the ship. The towing-lines of the flats strained ominously, so, as a further safeguard the

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anchors of both flats were dropped. There were now four anchors out, but the current still came down in torrents, battering logs and driftwood against the sides of the ship.

The Skipper got no rest that night and was several times on the point of sending word to the engineers to get up steam, in case it should be necessary to drive up against the current in order to prevent the anchors dragging further.

During the night a drowned Burman was washed into the wheel and became entangled with it. He had evidently been drifting about in the river for some time. None of the ordinary crew would touch the corpse, so the two sweeper-men were requisitioned. They got long bamboo poles and poked it away,—in bits. Next morning as we were proceeding on our way downstream, we caught him up, (the larger portion of him, that is to say,) floating downwards towards the sea. It was not until this unpleasant sight greeted my eyes that I was told of the episode of the night before.

Talking of corpses reminds me that I inadvertently saw another one that trip.

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I was watching a number of Burmans, dressed in their gayest and best clothes, making what I thought was a bonfire on the river-bank. It was a rainy day, and the fire burned slowly. There was a dense column of smoke, but very little flame. As we got closer it suddenly dawned on me what they were doing. I saw a highly-decorated pink and gold coffin broken up to add to the fuel, a yellow body rolled out on to the flames, and men prodding it with poles to hasten the process of cremation.

One gets so used to the calm beauty of the scenery along the river banks, and to the pleasing glimpses into the gentle, happy home life of the people, that a sudden, lurid picture like this gives one a distinct shock.

Burma is a fairly peaceful country now, but the older residents, during the time of the war, before Upper Burma was annexed, often had very unpleasant experiences. The wife of one of the senior Commanders told me that she once saw eleven men crucified in a line along the river bank, just below Mandalay, and her husband received a threatening letter at the same time, saying that there was a cross prepared for him also.

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He happened to be in Mandalay at the time of the massacres, when every relative or dependant of the royal house who was likely to prove dangerous to the throne, was brought out from prison, or hunted down in the streets, and put to death.

His account of the affair, as he gave it to me, was restrained but suggestive.

"And what did you do when you got away from the fort?" I asked.

His answer gave me a more vivid idea of the events that had taken place than volumes of description would have done.

He said, "I went to the house of a friend who lived near, begged a bottle of Eau de Cologne and poured it all over my clothes. Then I asked for a "peg." When I got back to the ship, I kicked off my boots and flung them overboard. I could never have worn them again."

His adventure was quite disagreeable enough, but other Flotilla Commanders have suffered even worse things in the days of the old régime. One of them, who was captured by the Burmans and imprisoned, was treated with great cruelty, even to the extent of being led out to execution, but,

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owing to some most fortunate intervention, or to fear of the consequences, he was led back again and kept in confinement until released by British troops.

Few people have been nearer death, yet he is alive now to tell the tale.

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CHAPTER XVII.

A TRIP TO MANDALAY.

In October the "Munepoor" went into dock for her annual overhaul, and the Skipper was sent on special duty to take the "Falam," a Chindwin river steamer, up to her head-quarters at Pakkoko. She carried neither cargo nor passengers, so, in the circumstances, I was allowed to accompany him. This little trip was one of the most delightful I have ever experienced on the river. The change of quarters from an oil-boat, stripped of all adornments in readiness for the occupation of an army of engineers, to a new, beautifully fitted-up passenger steamer, bright and fresh with white paint, polished brassware, and new carpets and hangings, was alone enjoyable; added to this was the fact that we were, escaping from the noise and dirt of the dockyard during one of the hottest months of the year, to the beauty and quiet spacious-ness of the river; and, last but not least, we had no oil-flats alongside, and so were free,

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for once, from the constant fear of fire and explosion.

The "Falam" was a stern-wheeler,—a most curious-looking craft. With her huge water-wheel and her tall, erect funnel like a factory-chimney (which, somehow, gave her an air of perpetual surprise) she looked more like a wandering and bewildered flour-mill than anything else. She drew eighteen inches of water when light, and only three feet when loaded, as the Chindwin River, for which she was destined, is always extremely shallow during the low-water season. In fact, at that time of the year, it is not unusual for the native passengers to get out in order to lighten her, at the worst shoals and wade alongside or walk along the bank, and I am told that, should one of these steamers pile up on a sandbank, while the river is falling, the passengers willingly help the coolies who are employed to float her. It must be a strange sight to see them, all busily at work apparently digging holes in the water, and then, when the sand is sufficiently loosened, helping to push the ship off into deeper water!

What impressed me most about the

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"Falam" was her silent motion, and the general air of quiet that prevailed about her. She burned wood-fuel, instead of oil as the "Munepoor" did, and, consequently, there was not the loud noise of getting-up steam in the morning that there is on an oil-boat. The throbbing of the smaller engines was not so noticeable, and there was no noise of paddle-wheels thrashing up the water on either side. Also, as we proceeded single-handed, the wash of water against the bows of the flats was missing too.

The bridge was situated on the roof, so that the privacy of the saloon was not invaded by the secunnie and the purri-wallah.

The ship glided along gently and noiselessly without any apparent effort, and, as one sat down below sewing or reading, it was difficult to realise that she moved at all, unless one glanced through the open windows and saw pagodas, hills, and trees sliding slowly past like clouds across a summer sky.

From the moment we swung round from the coal-ghat at Dalla, leaving the sound of clanging hammers and shouting coolies behind, a happy dream-like existence began.

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Instead of proceeding down the Rangoon River and through the Bassein Creek, we turned upstream, and cut across the delta through the Kattiyar and Panhlang Creeks to the main Irrawaddy, our extremely shallow draught making this possible.

These creeks are very narrow,—in fact, little wider than the steamer itself. In several places there was barely a foot of water to spare on either side of the vessel. Those who know the Cam or the Granta at Cambridge, can form some idea of what these channels are like, for they are sometimes as narrow as the Granta at its narrowest part.

Picture to yourself a steamer, as wide as the river itself, travelling down from Trumpington Mill, past the "Orchard," past King's and Clare and Trinity Colleges, out to Chesterton, and you will get some idea of the journey through the creeks from the Rangoon River to its junction with the Irrawaddy at Yandoon. Instead of willows, limes, elms, and chestnuts, imagine in their places plantain, palm, and rubber trees, and for the old, grey colleges, substitute teak-wood monasteries with shady, five-

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tiered roofs;—indeed, when one comes to consider the matter, a steamer looks as incongruous in the one setting as in the other.

It is seldom that any vessel larger than a launch passes through the Kattiyar Creek, so our progress attracted much attention. We sailed right into the midst of the domestic life of the Burmese villages. Once we had to slow up in order to avoid running down a file of Burmese girls, who were wading through the water from one bank to the other.

Onwards from Yandoon, as far as Nyounghla, we were in familiar waters, though the river seemed to have increased greatly in length and breadth since the last time we passed up,—an effect due, no doubt, to the small size of our vessel compared with that of the "Munepoor."

On our way we met one of the Chindwin River steamers coming down to be docked. She was towing another vessel alongside, and, on the mast-head, she exhibited two round black discs, signifying that she was "not under control," which was not surprising, considering that she—practically a flat-bottomed vessel—was towing another

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nearly her own size downstream. Needless to say, we gave her a wide berth.

One of the most interesting places we passed above Nyounghla was Pagan, once the capital of Burma, now an ancient and deserted city, with its hundreds of magnificent pagodas and temples slowly crumbling to ruins. It was an amazing sight! Domes spires, turrets, pinnacles, as far as the eye could see, gleamed white and gold in the sun. A wilderness of sacred buildings of every shape, size, and design, and of every degree of antiquity, stretched from the river to the horizon; and, fairest among them all, shone out the glorious Ananda Temple, snow-white and dazzling under the strong Eastern sunlight.

While the stern old Norman Cathedrals were growing to completion in our own land, these pagodas were springing up under the magic touch of bygone Indian builders, and, by comparing the widely differing styles of architecture, one can form some idea of the types of mind that evolved these structures, so different in conception, yet each so beautiful in its own way, and each harmonizing so surely with its particular

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environment.

Not the least of the charms of Pagan is its utter desolation. No human footsteps stir the dust of its crumbling temples, no ears record the music of the bells, no hands bring flowers and candles to the shrines.

And yet the decay of this sacred city does not mark the decline of the faith that built it. All over Burma on every knoll and hill, are springing up new and beautiful pagodas, an indication that the teachings of the Buddha are living and growing still.

Just as almost every little hamlet in England has its church, so nearly every hill in Burma has its pagoda, their spires—pagoda and church alike—pointing upwards to the sky, with the object of directing the thoughts away from little, worldly cares to higher and nobler influences.

Each sheltered church, shut in from the turmoil around, and each elevated pagoda, open to sun and moon and cleansing breezes, is a place of calm and quiet thoughts, a retreat where passions and distractions fall away, where trivial details are forgotten and only essentials realised, where one may, occasionally, get a glimpse of things in their

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true perspective, and, for a brief, blessed moment, feel in touch with the infinite.

This is accomplished by prayer in the Western churches, by meditation at the pagodas of the East. Each holy place satisfies the needs of the people who built it. The Burman is better capable of sustained concentration, when he is on a quiet, open spot with a broad outlook, where sunlight and moonlight alternately flood the scene, and where wandering breezes, and torrential rains work their will unchecked.

The Christian in England prefers a hushed, cloistered retreat guarded against the roughness of the elements, where even the light is filtered through pictured windows and subdued into rich, deep colours. It is here that he can best compose his thoughts and surrender his mind to the mysteries of religion. It is merely a matter of temperament, race, climate, heredity, environment —what you will.

Many things must be taken into consideration when studying the customs and beliefs of an alien race. There is no absolute standard of right and wrong for all the world. What is the noblest incentive for one race is

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not necessarily so for another,—beliefs, motives, aims, and acts may be widely different, but equally good.

There are misguided people who rejoice over every pagoda in Burma that is falling into ruins, and exult over every corrugated-iron tabernacle that springs up to spoil the beauty of the land and turn the people away from their simple, ancient faith.

It is a pity that this should be so. All intolerance and all self-righteousness are due to ignorance, lack of understanding, and lack of charity.

Buddhists realise this, and never ridicule the religion of another. One of their best-known precepts runs thus:—

> 'There should be no decrying of other sects,
> 'no depreciating of others without cause; but,
> 'on the contrary, a rendering of honour to the
> 'other sects for whatever in them is worthy of
> 'honour. By this conduct, both one's own
> 'sect will be helped forward and other sects
> 'benefited; by acting otherwise one's own sect
> 'will be destroyed in the injuring of others.
>
> Asoka inscriptions.

No people understand so well that "Ignorance is the root of all evil" and that

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"*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.*"

Most Christians have yet to advance an upward step, before they reach this attitude of mind.

Their difficulty arises, as Dr. Paul Carus points out, "from a wrong conception of Christianity. There are many Christians who assume that Christianity alone is in the possession of truth, and that man could not, in the natural way of his moral evolution, have obtained that nobler conception of life which enjoins the practice of a universal good-will towards both friends and enemies."

"This narrow view of Christianity," he goes on to say, "is refuted by the mere existence of Buddhism," a religion which was founded in the sixth century, *before* Christ and now numbers among its adherents four hundred and fifty seven millions of the human race.

Long before Christ came to teach the doctrines of meekness, long suffering and universal love, Buddha had said,

> Subdue the angry by friendliness,; overcome evil with good; conquer those that are greedy by liberality, and the liar with the speech of truth.
>
> **Dhammapada 221**

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and his followers observed his precepts by never persecuting those of other beliefs, never retaliating on their oppressors, and never performing their missionary work in an aggressive and intolerant spirit. Wherever they went they adopted the good points of the faiths with which they came in contact and from that foundation built up their teachings of the Good Law; and that is one of the reasons why their religion has spread so enormously and so rapidly.

Wherever they perceived truth they honoured it, even when it was expressed in foreign symbols. They did not condemn things merely because they did not understand them. Where they found customs and practices which were part and parcel of the life of the people, they did not strive to alter them, if they were not essentially wrong.

It is in this tolerant attitude that Buddhists are superior to average Christians. They are able to distinguish between what is important and what is trivial. So many people seize on the divergences between the two religions and exaggerate these, far beyond their relative value, instead of

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looking for that unity amid diversity, which, when found, reinforces the truths of both doctrines.

No intellectual advance can ever be made by magnifying differences, for "all progress lies, through opposites to their reconciliation."

Christianity and Buddhism differ widely in many respects, but, where they agree they both converge on truth, and where they differ it is not in matters of paramount importance. They agree as to the necessity for the subduing of the baser instincts and the cultivation of the higher faculties; but they appear to vary in their explanations of "the problem of our being here," and the problem of our going hence.

One religion asserts one thing and bases its claim to verity on 'insight,' the other asserts another thing and gives as its authority 'revelation' or 'inspiration,' but it is not essential to salvation that we believe in either the Story of Genesis or the Law of Dependent Origination; the resurrection of the body, or the re-incarnation of Karma; the everlasting delights of Heaven or the eternal peace of Nirvana.

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The Buddhist theories are more reasonable than the others, undoubtedly, but, until they can be scientifically proved, (which some Buddhists think may become possible with the advance of science) who can say which are right?

After all, as Augustine Birrell says, the verdict to be striven for is not 'Well guessed,' but 'Well done,'—and the doing well can be accomplished whatever views one holds as to our origin and ultimate end.

Since ignorance is the root of all evil, cultivate knowledge; knowledge will lead to understanding, and understanding to charity.

Where absolute knowledge is, there also is infinite compassion, and that is what the Buddhist is striving to reach when he tries to attain Supreme Enlightenment, and that too is the ideal of Christianity,—infinite compassion, universal love.

The higher the standpoint, the broader is one's outlook.

When any one has advanced sufficiently to be able to see the inward similarity between Buddhism and Christianity, he will perceive better the real significance of both, and so become alive to a little more of

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eternal truth. He will see that the rules recommended for the conduct of life by both Great Teachers are practically identical, differing only slightly to suit the characteristics of the races for which they were destined, and he may also grasp the fact, when he has floated away from crude and concrete ideas to the abstract truths of which they are symbols, that the hopes, aims, and ideals of both religions are alike, that to be "one with God" is to attain Nirvana, for Nirvana means the melting away of ignorance, the extinction of all evil, the annihilation of every desire that binds one down to a worldly existence, the final cessation of sorrow; it means above all things—Peace; the separate personal character is poured back into the sum of characters, the illusion of 'self' is lost in the realm of the unconditioned, the individual merges into the infinite,

"The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea."

This is a very wide digression, but, since it was inspired by the memory of beautiful, desolate, decaying and misjudged Pagan, it calls for no excuse, and, if it disabuses peo-

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ple's minds of the idea that the pagodas of that ancient city are heathen temples built by blind and benighted beings to enshrine the idols they worship,—and, further if it leads people to study the Buddhist religion from more than one point of view, before condemning it utterly, it will, at least, have served some good purpose.

Each night on the upward journey we anchored after sunset, but, as it happened, the day's run never ended near any town, and no other Flotilla boat found an anchorage near us, so that, until Pakkoko was reached, we had no other company than our own, and that of the Chief Engineer occasionally.

At Pakkoko our peaceful existence came to an end. The "Falam" had to be handed over to one of the Commanders on the Chindwin River, the steamer he vacated had to be taken up to Myingyan to go on the ferry run, and another ship had to be brought down to take its place.

For several days we hovered about be-

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tween Myingyan and Pakkoko *juggling* with ships, never sleeping for two consecutive nights on the same boat.

Except for the tiresome business of continually checking inventories, it was an easy, restful time for the Skipper, and, for me, this little interlude was made very enjoyable by hospitable friends at Pakkoko. One particular day spent in the cool, shady bungalow of the Flotilla Agent stands out in my memory as the most pleasant day of an entirely pleasant trip. The only drawback was the three-mile ride in a bullock-cart from the shore to the house, which ride—with all due credit to the patent spring seat—was distinctly uncomfortable.

After the various ships had been shuffled and re-shuffled into the required order, we made a final change to the "Thambyadine"—that gallant little vessel which did such useful work at the time of the last Burmese expedition—and proceeded up to Mandalay.

Since it has been my misfortune to visit Mandalay only in the hot-weather I cannot speak very enthusiastically of its charms.

Nevertheless it is preferable to Rangoon

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in that it is still essentially a Burmese town, whereas Rangoon is so much over-run by Chinese, Japanese, Jews, Parsees, Armenians and natives of India, that very few Burmans are to be found, except in the out-lying villages.

At the time of this visit Mandalay had just been devastated by plague, and presented a very dreary appearance. The European residents were still up in the hills, and, among the Burmans, almost every third house was standing empty, its former inhabitants either dead or gone away in fear.

We ransacked the town for carvings in teak-wood, for which it is famed, but we found all the Burmese carving shops closed and empty. Eventually we discovered a Chinaman who had bought up every available piece of work from the panic-stricken Burmans. He, however, asked the most exhorbitant prices for it, and was evidently not anxious to sell at all, until the tourist season, when he expected to make huge profits.

The bazaar, usually so crowded and animated, was one of the dreariest spectacles in the whole town, its few stalls, scattered here and there, serving merely to accentuate

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the general sense of desolation.

Our appearance brought a little life into the scene. One old Burman gong-seller, who was sitting dozing over his wares, started up and began to clang a gong to attract our attention. Then he employed his sons, his assistants, and anyone else near to do the same. The sound of a Burmese gong struck singly is very pleasant, but many sounded together produce a deafening clamour. We tried to escape, but the men followed us round, clanging furiously, and we were unable to get away without making a purchase.

In contrast to these people were some Burmese girls who kept a stall on which rubies, spinels, white and blue sapphires, jade and other stones were displayed. We particularly wished to buy some jade, and, in consequence, they appeared quite indifferent as to whether they made a sale or not. They asked a ridiculously high price for it, and, when we mentioned a lower figure, laughed and shook their heads, and then began to chatter together, completely ignoring us. Still, it was only a question of time and patience, as it always is in these cases, and we eventually got the jade at very little

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over the price we originally intended to pay.

In the afternoon we visited the Arracan Pagoda, and did what was expected of us in the matter of feeding the turtles and smearing gold leaf on the immense, gilded figure of the Buddha. There is much that is interesting and beautiful about this pagoda, but, to my mind, it cannot compare with the Shwe Dagone in Rangoon.

Another figure of the Buddha in Mandalay impressed me much more than the one in the Arracan Pagoda, though I have a rather hazy recollection of its whereabouts. I think it was in a building near the foot of Mandalay Hill, not far from the Kû-tho-dau, a place where there are about seven hundred little pagodas each enshrining an inscribed slab of marble.

After leaving the Kû-tho-dau, we had wandered around, until we lost our bearings, and we stepped into this building not knowing where we were, or what to expect. As our eyes got accustomed to the gloom, we saw a narrow passage ahead of us, and, at the end of it, a huge, white plinth and part of the drooping fingers of an immense,

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marble hand.

Leaving the passage, which was a sort of elongated porch, we came into a room built over a gigantic, seated figure of the Buddha. The fingers of the hand appeared to be between four and five feet long, and one had to crane one's neck most uncomfortably in order to see the massive head towering up among the shadows of the roof. In such a limited space the statue appeared enormous,—terrifying!

The block of marble out of which it was hewn must have been of tremendous size, since the height of the figure, as far as we could judge, was about thirty feet. We could not get far enough back to survey it all in one glance, but what was lost in perspective was gained in grandeur. In the presence of such a monstrous figure one felt very small and insignificant.

The day was drawing to a close, and the feeble, yellow light of the candles, flickering in the gathering gloom, added to the eerieness of the scene. There were no Europeans near, and the scattered illuminations had a weird effect on the Mongolian type of face of the Burmans in the shrine. Stories of

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strange happenings in Eastern lands flashed through my mind, and I hastily turned to go, though, of course, there was absolutely no danger at all. One is as safe in a crowd of Burmans, as amongst one's own countrymen—probably safer.

Our stay in Mandalay was limited to two days, so, in order to see as much as possible in the time, we took advantage of what little light was left to drive quickly round, and through, the fort. I caught only a few hurried impressions as we bowled along,—a stagnant moat choked with water-lilies; white walls with roofed gateways at long intervals; level roads crossing at right angles; dreary, empty palaces; quiet, pretty gardens; native soldiers in their lines, and white-clad tennis-players strolling homewards.

Then it became too dark to see anything, so we passed out of the fort again and turned towards the shore. It was all very quiet and humdrum. One could scarcely believe that, only a few years back, the place had resounded with the shouts and shrieks of a hideous massacre instigated by King Thebaw's malevolent queen.

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Before going back to the ship, we turned in for a short time at the Irrawaddy Club, 'where Flotilla skippers most do congregate,' and there indulged in a game of "snookers," which was chiefly remarkable for the hilarity occasioned by two of the men—kindred spirits—who, after just missing each other for months, happened to arrive in Mandalay at the same time. They pretended to be so overwhelmed with delight at seeing each other, that, every time they met round the table in the course of the game, there was a most affecting and pathetic scene of welcome.

Afterwards, at the pressing invitation of one of the Commanders, we went aboard a Bhamo steamer to dine. In the saloon we found a piano, to the great delight of the Skipper, to whom the lack of music was a real hardship. We also discovered that the Commander was a very creditable performer on the piccolo, so, with vocal and two kinds of instrumental music the evening passed very pleasantly.

It was a tiring, crowded day, but not unwelcome after long weeks of the monotonous life on the river.

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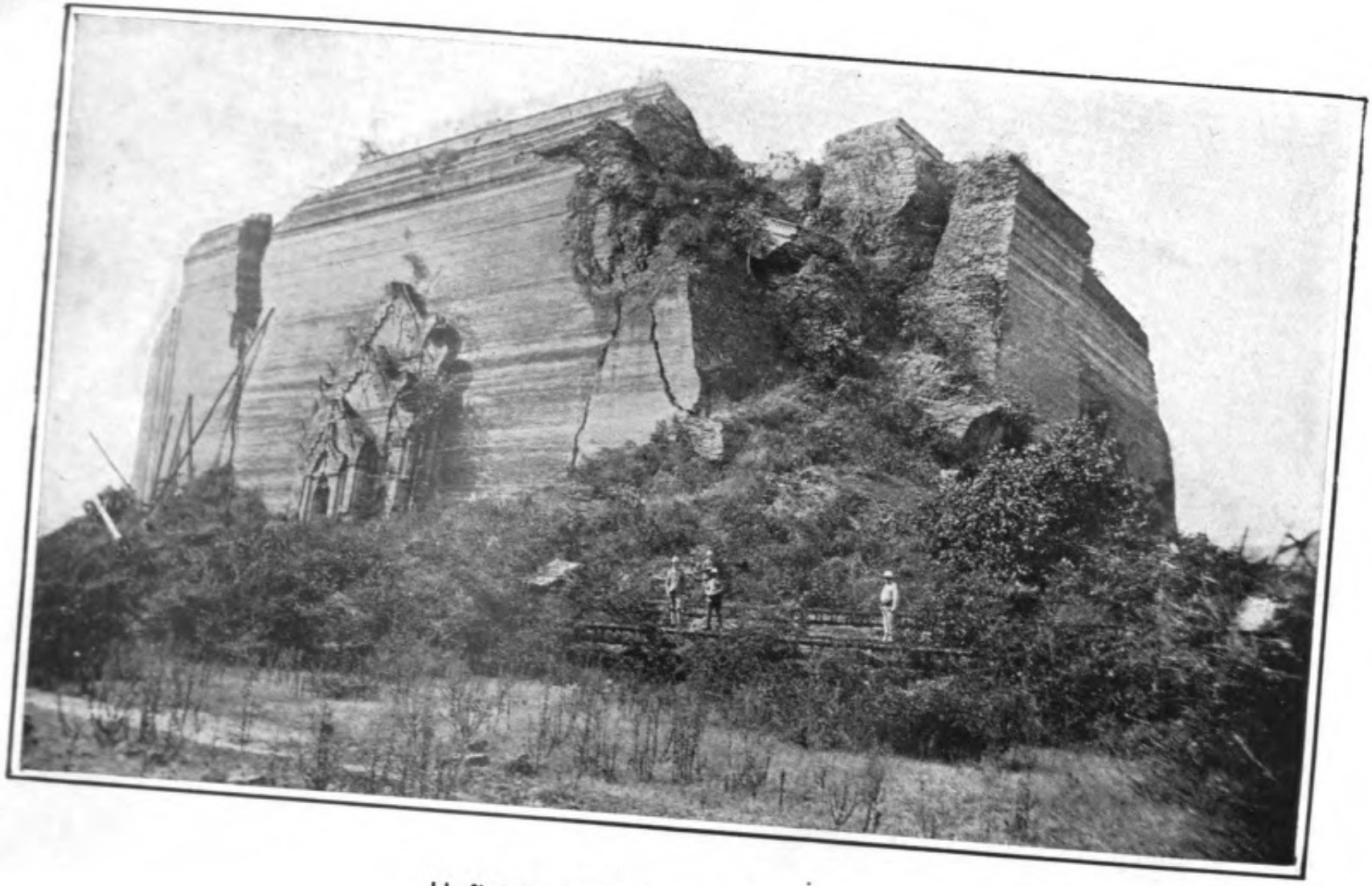

Unfinished Pagoda at Mingoon. Photo by Klier, Rangoon.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A Morning at Mingoon.

A few miles north of Mandalay, on the other side of the river, is situated Mingoon, a place chiefly noted for its bell and ruined pagoda.

Owing to the kindness of the Irrawaddy Flotilla agent in Mandalay in lending us a launch, I was able to visit the place.

My companion on this little expedition was the Chief Officer of one of the cargo-boats. We left very early in the morning in order to escape as much of the heat as possible. Previous to our departure there had been some discussion as to whether it was possible to hear the Mingoon bell in Mandalay, and we had agreed to strike the bell and notice the time we did so, while the Commander of one of the vessels lying at the ghat had also agreed to record the time, if he should hear the sound of the bell.

Accordingly we steamed away up the river and, arriving at a pretty, well-wooded spot on the opposite bank, landed and made our

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way inland. At first we saw no one of whom to ask the way, but, after a time, we met some old women in the garb of Burmese nuns, who offered themselves as guides. They led us to the bell, and then clamoured for pice, a proceeding which I cannot account for, because it is against the rules of the Buddhist order for any member of it to touch money; and, to their honour let it be said, this was the only time that I have ever been asked for money by any Buddhist monk or nun in Burma. However, to still their importunity, we gave them what small change we had and sent them away.

Then we turned our attention to the bell. It was of tremendous size and weight, and hung from massive, iron supports, having, so I was told, broken through the two large teak-wood logs which had been put up as cross-bars by the Burmans. The lip of the bell hung about two feet from the ground. After admiring it from the outside, I crawled underneath and stood up inside the bell, under which there would have been ample room for half a dozen people to sit down to a round table and take tea.

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All round the inside were scratched, or written, or painted the names of sight-seers, who had made use of the blank metal surface to record their presence, in lieu of the pages of a visitors' book.

There was no clapper to the bell. It had to be struck from the outside like a gong. I pressed my weight up against the side of it to see if it was possible to make it swing, but I found that the bell was absolutely immovable.

Then a strange thing happened. The idea suddenly occurred to me, "suppose the bell should break through the supports and fall, as it did before! Then I should be imprisoned underneath and left to starve to death." I knew that it would be days, and probably weeks, before I could be released from such a position, as the engineers and machinery necessary to lift the bell, which weighed about eighty tons, would not be at hand. *

I was absolutely overcome with fear; never before or since have I experienced such a sensation. I wanted to stoop down and scramble out as quickly as possible, but

* The Skipper here suggests that a tunnel could have been made to reach me. That idea never occurred to me.

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another terrifying thought arose. I felt convinced that the bell would fall, as I was crawling out, and crush me to death. I cannot account for the terror that assailed me. I stood there white and trembling, almost paralysed with fright, feeling that the choice lay only between a lingering or a sudden death, and that escape was impossible. I thought of myself in the agonies of starvation beating against the solid, metal wall, pleading vainly for release. I pictured myself, foiled in the attempt at escape, pinned down and struggling under that tremendous weight. Before my eyes swam the tortured expressions on the faces of carved, stone imps that writhed and squirmed beneath the capital of a pillar in the village church at home, and I saw my own face convulsed with the same fiendish pain.

I could not shake off the dread that held me. I had forgotten all else but my terrible predicament. By no effort of will could I summon up enough courage to depart. I do not know how long the fit lasted. The voice of my companion, calling from outside, recalled me to myself. I stooped down and rushed quickly out into the open air once more.

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Since this occurrence, I have met with people who have had similar experiences; in fact, doctors have a name for this particular failing. They call it "claustrophobia"—a morbid dread of confined places—and they say that it is not at all uncommon. This, however, was my only attack, and I hope it will never occur again. I cannot shake off the impression that there must be something uncanny about that bell to have provoked such a sensation in me. I wonder what happened at the casting of it, whether any dreadful accident occurred, involving human suffering, or the loss of many lives. It would be interesting to know.

After this fit of fear, reaction set in, and, in order to work off the tide of renewed energy that flowed through me, I attacked the bell vigorously with a heavy stick that lay at hand, but I could not succeed in drawing from it anything but the sound of the wood striking the solid metal. Then my companion searched for and found a fairly-large log of wood. This we lifted together and used as a battering-ram, dashing it with all our strength against the lower part of the bell. A low-pitched rolling

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sound seeming to come from far away answered our efforts. It was merely a hint of the noise of which the great bell was capable, —like the deep-toned mutterings of a mighty giant. Three times we struck the bell, and three times did the low, sullen waves of sound swell out, till the disturbed air thrilled in our ears, but, though we exerted all our strength, we could elicit nothing stronger than this echoing, elusive note.

When we got back to Mandalay the Commander of the ship declared that he had heard the bell, but it is extremely unlikely that such a sound should have carried a distance of three miles, or more, and I have not yet come to a conclusion as to whether he was telling the truth, or deliberately chaffing, or merely stretching a point in order to gratify me.

Leaving the bell we strolled along till we came to a white pagoda more like an ancient Persian ziggurat in construction than like the bell-shaped pagodas of Lower Burma. It consisted of a series of terraces, each one smaller than the other, till the last one at the top was simply a small shrine enclosing a Buddha-rupa. We walked round the

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terraces in turn and found them adorned with many quaint and clever alabaster figures,—beeloos, leogryphs, and all sorts of fanciful birds and beasts, but each one was either headless, or armless, or mutilated in some fashion—probably by tourists.

The stairway that led upwards was roofed over and refreshingly cool and dark, so we left the terraces and proceeded to the top of the building. Here we found the only image that was not broken or dilapidated. We saw no living person about the place, but fresh flowers were lying in front of the shrine, and the little room was swept and clean; in fact, the broom that had been recently used was in a corner, leaning up against the wall.

Little unseen bells were tinkling sweetly in the breeze outside, and, from the topmost terrace, a beautiful scene was visible. The pagoda itself, slanting outwards from beneath our feet, glistened like polished marble, till its white radiance was hurtful to the eyes. At the base a cool, green garden spread itself, and then a grove of trees, a strip of sand, and the wide river, which was probably about two miles wide at

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that time of the year. From the other side could be seen a long vista of undulating country bounded by distant lines of hills.

I have never heard anyone mention this pagoda, or seen any account of it in a book, but to me it was far more interesting and beautiful than anything else I saw at Mingoon.

The noted pagoda at Mingoon,—the one which was intended to be the largest in the world and which was abandoned before it was one third finished, and was afterwards cracked across by an earthquake,—did not attract me half so much as this nameless one. Still it would have been a neglect of duty to visit Mingoon and not see this pagoda, so from our point of vantage, we noted its position, and, descending, made our way towards it.

Only the plinth of this was finished—a huge, cubical structure of brick rising to a considerable height before beginning to narrow in terraces towards the top. In each side there were large cavities which were probably intended as shrines. We peeped into these and saw nothing but rubbish and dirt, and in each I noticed a

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peculiar and most unpleasant odour which reminded me first of mice, then of ferrets and then of pigs. As I was wondering whence it proceeded, the Chief Officer directed my attention to the roof.

I looked, and saw numbers of large bats black and loathsome, hanging head downwards from the bricks. It was their presence that accounted for the strange, verminous odour that hung about the place.

We walked round the several low platforms that surrounded the main pile, in order to get different aspects of the building, but found nothing more of interest about the pagoda, except its bulk which was certainly immense, and would have been most imposing had the whole thing been completed.

By this time also the heat and glare were becoming intense, so we made all haste back to the launch, and set out again for Mandalay.

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CHAPTER XIX.

On a mail-boat.

We made the return journey from Mandalay to Rangoon on the "Siam" one of the Flotilla Company's mail-boats.

Very few people out of Burma have any idea of the size and capacity of these boats. Built for river-work only, with a necessarily shallow draught, they are yet rated—the larger ones—to carry three thousand passengers. With a length of three hundred and twenty six feet, and a breadth across the sponsons of fifty feet, they are as big as many an ocean-going vessel.

Our saloon cabin was a commodious room, fitted, not with bunks, but with two ordinary and very comfortable single-beds. There was plenty of air-space, and, with large windows and an electric fan, our journey, even though it was made during the heat of October, was quite enjoyable.

Moreover, it was a pleasant change to travel down the river and be totally unaware

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of the difficulties of navigation, to be seated at tiffin in the saloon, or taking an afternoon's siesta under the fan in one's cabin, or playing a hand at Bridge after dinner, while the Commander was racing his ship round dangerous headlands or through awkward rock channels.

For the first part of the journey there was a full complement of passengers, and the evenings were occupied with music or cards.

The dinner-table talk that trip was of unusual interest. It ranged from the teachings of the latter-day apostles to the deeds of valiant hunters, and from the practices of Christian Scientists to the most far-reaching speculations of theosophy.

One man urged the genuineness of the pretensions of a certain number of men in Scotland who, not many years ago, were suddenly endowed with the gift of tongues (to the extent, at least, that they spoke a language unintelligible to the rest of mankind). Another man, who was a firm believer in astrology, discoursed learnedly about horoscopes and spoke with awe and conviction of the influence of stars on the destiny of one's life. Another opened out a new world

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of thought to me when he talked of æons and kalpas and crores of years, of the limitations and the infinitudes of Time and Space, and of terrific influences ebbing and flowing in enormous sequences through planetary and solar systems of almost unthinkable magnitude.

It was an interesting experience to become acquainted with several totally new and unheard-of beliefs in the course of one day. Truly, we live and learn!

I once met an earnest and devout *Agapemonite*,—but again I am tempted to digress.

We went ashore only once during the downward journey, and that was at a little village above Pagan, where we bought some curious and cleverly-made lacquer-ware.

For the Skipper the chief interest of the trip lay in watching how another man worked his ship, while I, on the other hand, found the various people on board an absorbing study.

One day we went for a stroll aft among the native-passengers. No cabins were provided for them, but all the accommodation they needed, apparently, was sufficient deck-

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space on which to spread out their sleeping-mats and dispose their goods and chattels around them. So long as meals were regular and a daily bath obtainable they required nothing more. They settled down as unconcernedly for a journey of a week or a fortnight, as if they were going for a ten minutes' ride on a tram-car.

That is one of the advantages of 'the simple life.' The ordinary Burmans never feel the lack of spring-mattresses and table utensils, because they have never acquired the habit of using them.

One wonders why the missionaries in the Karen schools make a point of teaching the girls to sleep in beds, to use spoons and forks, and to require a chair to sit on and a table for their meals. A Christian nurse-girl, fresh from the mission schools, usually demands these things, and, as a natural consequence, there is trouble with the other servants. Another disadvantage is, that, if the girl travels at all, she finds the third-class accommodation alloted to her a real hardship after the style of living to which she has grown accustomed. Surely there could be no harm in letting

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girls continue their simple, natural customs, whenever they are not absolutely contrary to the rules of hygiene. It cannot be necessary to the Christian life that they should be taught habits which, to them, are luxurious.

Though they eat with their fingers they do it daintily; and there is more innate delicacy in their custom of taking their meals apart and alone than in ours of sitting at table and eating in company.

I do not propose that we should imitate them, but I do suggest that it might be better to let each race keep to its own customs in such minor details.

The Skipper and I found the Burmese people on deck an interesting study. The behaviour of some of the young girls was quite amusing. They were shy and reserved in demeanour when spoken to, but they displayed no false modesty. The secret of their complexion and hair-dressing, for instance, was no secret at all. They apparently did not mind the whole world knowing how it was done.

As we stood watching, we saw several young girls powdering and polishing their

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faces, touching up their eyebrows, and combing out, oiling, and adjusting their false tails of hair, in full public view, with absolute unconcern.

The deck was so crowded with passengers that it was almost impossible to walk along it without stepping on a sleeping-mat, or stumbling amongst someone's pots and pans. It seemed as if all the inhabitants of a Burmese village had transplanted themselves on to the deck of the steamer, and were going on living their ordinary life uninterruptedly.

Men were smoking, or chatting, or sitting in dreamy silence chewing betel-nut. Mothers were attending to the needs of their little ones. Children were sleeping, or trotting about, or sprawling on the deck amusing themselves in the way children do all the world over.

It would be interesting to know how students of folk-lore would account for the fact that little Burmese children who live in remote, jungle villages and have probably never come in contact with the English, (certainly never with English *children*) are to be found playing the same games that

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have delighted the youth of England for ages past.

We saw some little girls, for instance, busily engaged, with string evolving, what are know as 'Cats' Cradles,' the only difference between their game and the English one being that the former seems to be usually played alone. The patterns are changed by the skilful manipulation of their supple Burmese fingers, instead of by transferring from one pair of hands to another, as it is done in England.

Another group of children, squatted round in a circle, were intent on a game played with five stones such as gutter urchins play on the pavements of the streets at home. It was amusing to watch one of the players, a grave little youngster of about five years, holding a lighted cigarette in his left hand, while he threw up and caught the pebbles with his right.

Further on we found a pretty little girl who had tied a string to a cigarette-box and was dragging it along the deck with an empty match-box trailing behind. That, we were told, when we asked her, was a big steamer with a sampan in tow. We stayed

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for some time talking with her, and she informed us proudly that she was the sister of the little boy who had been born on board only two days previously. To please her we went along to see the child and duly admired it, giving the mother huge gratification when we told her that it had a beautiful, white skin.

Besides the Burmese passengers there were many others on board:—a gang of a hundred coolies returning from work on a rice-mill, a number of chetties—who, on account of their caste, kept well apart from the rest of the crowd—, a few Shan traders, some Chinese merchants, and others whose race and occupation we had not sufficient knowledge of the various peoples of the country to be able to discover.

Right away aft were situated the second-class cabins and saloon, occupied that trip by a party of five or six Eurasians, while, on the lower deck, were the Commander's officers' and engineers' cabins and bath-rooms and the engineers' mess-room, and lower still, in a portion of the hold abaft the engine-room, were the crew's quarters, where between forty and fifty Chittagonians had

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their habitation.

The ship swarmed with life. There were separate galleys and galley-staffs to prepare food for the different races and castes on board. There were post and ticket offices with their attendant clerks, and bazaar-sellers dispersing cooked foods and other delectables to the passengers. There were barbers, and supercargoes, and butlers, and ayahs, and native servants, and Burmese pilots,—while, on the flat that was towing alongside, there was an elephant with its mahout, several buffaloes, and a few score head of other cattle, not to mention the goats and dozens of chickens that were kept on board to provide food for passengers and crew.

In the fore part of the ship, where the first-class deck, saloon, and cabins were situated, we had heard and seen nothing of the hundred other people on board. It was quite a ... aft from our quiet, roon ... the crowded, noisy passen...

Flotilla bo... so wel... found as ... d-wa... steambo... h pa...

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Mail Steamer nearing Landing at Prome

Photo by A. R. Gardner, Prome

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In the fore part of the ship, where the first-class deck, saloon, and cabins were situated, we had heard and seen nothing of the hundreds of other people on board. It was quite a revelation to go aft from our quiet, roomy quarters to the crowded, noisy passenger-deck.

Flotilla boats are certainly not so well-found as some of the American inland-water steamboats which are provided with palm

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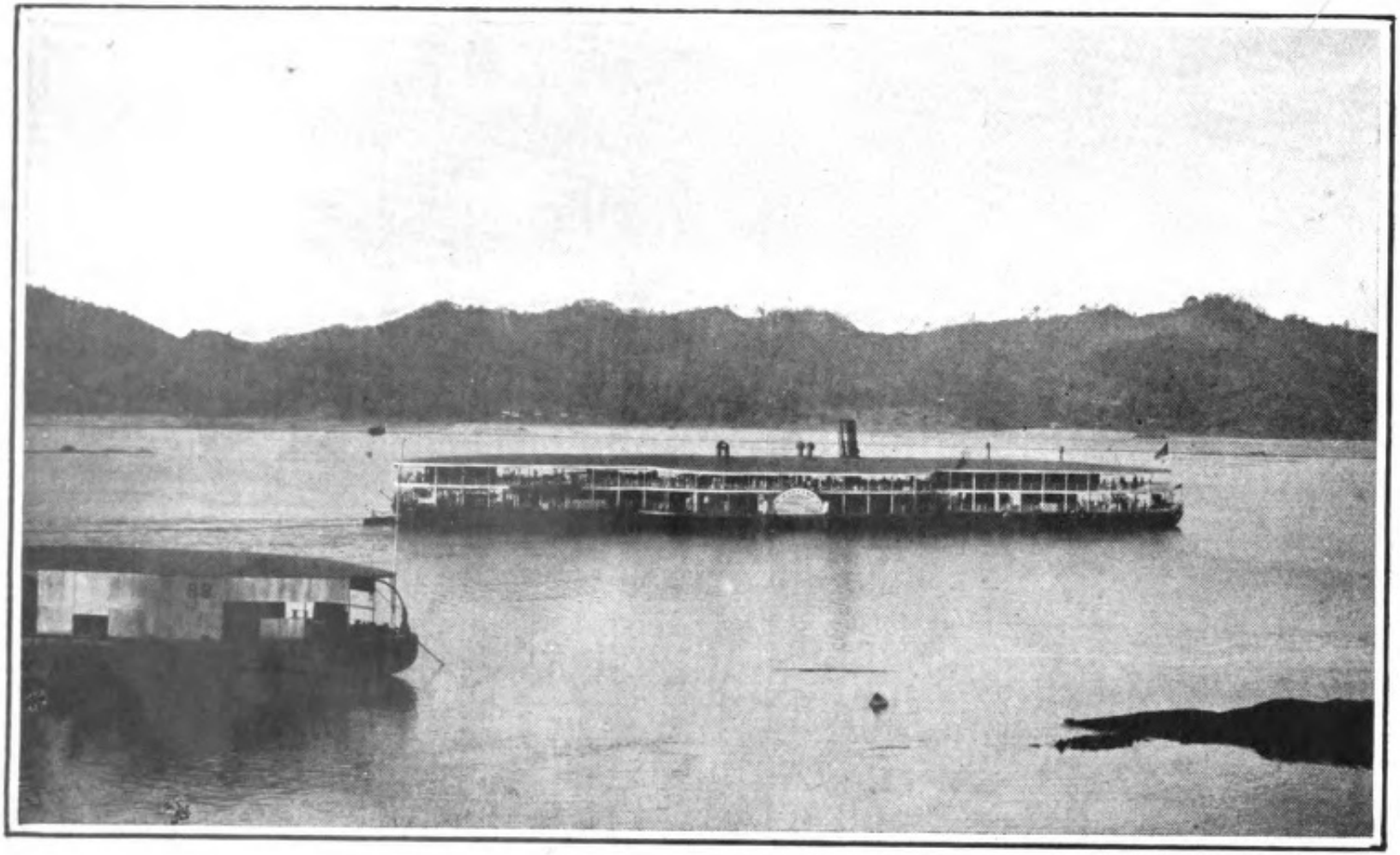

Photo by A. R. Gardner, Prome

Mail Steamer nearing Landing at Prome

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groves, and playing-fountains, and which carry their own artesian wells around with them (so a citizen of the States told me) but they meet most of the requirements of travellers in the East, and the other luxuries we are content to leave to our American friends.

We did not have time to get tired of the journey on the "Siam." It ended all too soon.

A mail-steamer does not take long to travel down the river, provided that she does not ground, or meet with other accidents, and, before we had fairly settled down to the life on board, we found that we had reached our destination, and it was time to collect our various belongings and disembark.

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CHAPTER XX.

LAST DAYS ON THE RIVER.

On our arrival in Rangoon, we found the "Munepoor" rejuvenated and ready for occupation. The crew and galley-staff were gradually re-assembled, and, in the course of a few days everything was complete, and we were "back once more on the old trail"—the trail that, in spite of its apparent sameness, was always new.

The cold weather was setting in, the first cold weather I had ever experienced on the river, and the coldest cold weather I had ever experienced anywhere. It was the great difference in degree between the temperature at noon, and at morning and evening, that made the cold so trying; otherwise it would have been most enjoyable. During the day one needed half a dozen different changes of clothing, ranging from an Esquimaux outfit at dawn, to airy muslins at mid-day, in order to accommodate oneself to the varying temperature. Many a night, as we ran up-

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stream by searchlight, have I sat by the Skipper, shivering with cold in spite of the fact that I was wearing a thick over-coat and a warm, woollen cap pulled down over my ears; and the Skipper, owing to his longer residence in the country, felt the cold even worse than I did.

The crew, also, seemed to be very susceptible to the changes of temperature. At night the secunnies used to muffle themselves in all the warm clothes they could find, the pilot was always inventing excuses to go below (whence he would return smelling of tobacco-smoke) and the purri-wallah was given to skulking round the corner of the wind-screen in order to avoid the biting blast.

Still, we much preferred the cold weather to any other season, as the brisk, keen breeze restored one's jaded spirits and made one feel full of surplus energy,—a most unusual sensation in Burma.

We soon fell back into the old routine,—getting under way at the first streaks of dawn, running all day, and anchoring at night, stopping only at Thayetmyo and Nyounghla, and very seldom seeing any

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other white people. One day was just like every other day, Sundays only being distinguished from the rest of the week by the fact that we had mulligatawny soup for breakfast, and roast-duck as one of the dinner-dishes.

And, one week, when the cook made a miscalculation, Sunday fell on a Monday.

That reminds me of a story which I heard or read somewhere. I do not know if it is technically accurate, (stories of this kind seldom bear critical investigation) but in any case, it will bear repeating.

It relates to certain missionaries who, leaving the beaten track, went out in native boats to a little, uncharted island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, and there began to convert the natives.

These missionaries were Scotch, and Presbyterian, and their pet foible was the strict observance of the Sunday. No work or play of any kind was allowed amongst their little flock on that particular day, and the poor, bewildered natives were threatened with the direst punishments of Hell for any transgression of the rule.

Not long after this, a Seventh-day Advent-

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ist made his appearance on the scene and proceeded to gather the still unregenerate natives into a fold of his own. He, also, believed in keeping holy the Sabbath day, and enforced the rule among his own following with many terrible warnings of the wrath to come.

Time went on, and no more missionaries arrived, so that little Pacific island settled down into two camps, one of them sanctifying the Saturday with all religious rites, and the other observing Sunday with equal strictness; and each of them firmly believing that all the members of the other party were going straight to perdition for their errors.

But one day an unforeseen event occurred which caused a considerable flutter in that little community. A large ship, blown out of its regular course, visited the island, and the captain, who heard the story of the rival religious factions, took careful observations of the position of the place.

Then he told them that the island was not in East longitude, as they had supposed, but in West longitude. Consequently they were a day ahead of the correct time; and that meant that the Adventists

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had made Friday their holy day, and the self-righteous Presbyterians had been honouring the Sabbath of their despised rivals; while, worst of all, the true Sunday, which they had regarded as Monday, had been desecrated consistently, week after week, by work and play and all manner of forbidden things.

The story ends there. I do not know how the missionaries made matters clear to the natives, or whether they tried to explain at all. I am also left wondering whether the missionaries believed that they themselves and those they had led astray would be punished for their unwitting breaking of the Fourth Commandment. It provides food for speculation, or, as the Frenchmen say, "gives furiously to think."

We, on the "Munepoor," neglected the observance of the Sunday quite as badly as the poor natives on the Pacific island, but this also was due to circumstances not within our control. Not only did the holy-days pass by unheeded, the holidays were un-noted also. Easter and Whitsuntide had come and gone without our being aware of it.

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Christmas Day, however, was an exception. On our entrance into the saloon at breakfast-time, we found it gaily decorated with flags and foliage, and the table was further adorned with three, large, pink-and-white iced cakes, gifts from the crew. Later in the day we were presented with another weird concoction of food, which the Serang informed us with pride that he had made himself. It was served in a vegetable dish, it looked like porridge, and it tasted chiefly of butter, raisins, onions and semolina!

We fully appreciated the spirit that prompted the gifts, but I cannot say that we were grateful for the gifts themselves. They *looked* very nice, but we could not possibly eat them, and the difficulty was how to dispose of them. Some of the dishes, I must confess, disappeared overboard, when all was still at night.

By a combination of fortunate and fortuitous circumstances, it happened that three ships lay at Nyounghla on Christmas night;—ourselves just arrived, another oil-boat ready to depart at daybreak, and a cargo-boat on its downward journey.

The opportunity for a celebration was to

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good to be missed, and when we received an invitation to dinner from the Commander of the "Karenee," we gladly accepted it. Though we were miles away from Rangoon, lying in a lonely stretch of the river off the oil-fields, we determined to do justice to the occasion. The Skipper and all the other men got into their official purple and fine linen, and I brought out a new dinner-gown from its camphor-scented chest, in order to grace the event.

Nine of us sat down to a dinner, that, in the exaltation of the moment, we felt would have done justice to the "Carlton." The plum-pudding, the mince-pies, and the ham (which accompanied the turkey), had been sent out specially from home, and the "Karenee's" butler had surpassed even himself. Champagne flowed that night, and many were the toasts we drank to absent friends and loved ones at home.

Afterwards there was music,—even an oil-boat boasting a piano and a very creditable gramophone.

During the course of the evening the Commander, officers and engineers of the cargo-boat, attracted by the sounds of

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festivity, came across. They had evidently been making merry with Christmas crackers and bon-bons for, as they entered the saloon in single-file, the Commander, resplendent in blue and gold, leading the way, each man was wearing a gaily-coloured paper crown or bonnet.

More music followed, and, as was only natural when most of the men there had served their time in wind-jammers, they soon fell to singing old sailor chanties.

The Skipper led the way with,

"Sally Brown, she's a gay old lady.
Way, hey, heave and go!
Oh! Sally Brown is a gay old lady,
Spend my money on Sally Brown."

and all the others put as much vigour into the chorus as if they were hoisting the topsail yard, homeward bound from 'Frisco.

Then someone else sang,

"Poor old Storm is dead and gone"

a mournful chanty in a minor key, and the high, scarred cliffs of Nyounghla threw back over the quiet waters the echoes of that slow, sad chorus,

Ay! ay! ay! boys we'll storm a-long!

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till somehow, (though I have never seen the reality,) a vision rose before my eyes of a lonely, little sailing-ship tossing on tumultuous seas round the Horn, while, to cold and weary men up aloft, came the sound of the chanty of those on the deck below mingling with the last efforts of a dying gale.

But this was too sad a song for Christmas night, so one of the men from the "Burma" struck a livelier note with,

"Ranzo, boys, O Ranzo!"

and others contributed "Roll the Cotton Down," "Blow my bully boys blow!" and "I'll go no more a-roving."

At eleven o'clock I went back to the "Munepoor," but sleep was long in coming, for the sound of the songs still carried over the water, and, through my last, waking thoughts, jingled the nonsensical words and rollicking tune of "Ten Thousand Miles Away."

Oh! a capital ship for a deep-sea trip
Was the "Walloping Window Blind,"
No wind that blew dismayed the crew
Or troubled the captain's mind,
And the man at the wheel was inclined to feel
Contempt for the wildest blow,
For it often appeared, when the gale had cleared,
That he'd been in his bunk below.

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With the morning work began again. The loaded oil-flats were brought alongside, and soon we were steaming away on the downward journey.

That Christmas day was the only break in the monotony for many weeks, but, nevertheless, those were happy times. We lived in a little world of our own, apart from the rest of mankind, and could almost fancy, at times, that our most cherished dream was realised, and that we were cruising about in a yacht of our own, free to roam over the whole world of waters at will.

Only one thing marred our happiness, and that was the disquieting account we were constantly hearing about the Burma Oil Company's pipe-line. It had been talked of for so long that we had come to regard it as merely a myth and a delusion, a sort of rigid sea-serpent that would always be rumoured about, but never actually be seen.

Now alas! there was every prospect of its being finished; and, when that happened, the Flotilla boats would not be needed to carry down the oil, and, when there were no oil-boats running, there would be no boats on which a Flotilla Commander

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would be allowed to carry his wife.

It was not a pleasant prospect,—after one, brief year of happiness, the doom of a practically life-long separation looming ahead; to realise that never, except at five-year intervals, was there a chance of being together for more than two or three days at a time.

The constant companionship that we had so much appreciated, and that had served to mitigate so many hardships, was now to come to an end and be replaced by long absences interspersed with hurried, flying visits disturbed always by duties connected with the ship.

No wonder that the Skipper and I felt despondent, he whose ship and whose home held equal places in his regard, was fated to have the two chief interests of his life torn apart; I, who had caught the Skipper's enthusiasm for his ship, and had learned to love the swaying of her deck, the swirl of the water round her prow, the wide-spreading river-solitudes, and the free expanse of land and water and sky,—I, who felt choked and cramped within four walls, had before me the prospect of long years in a crowded

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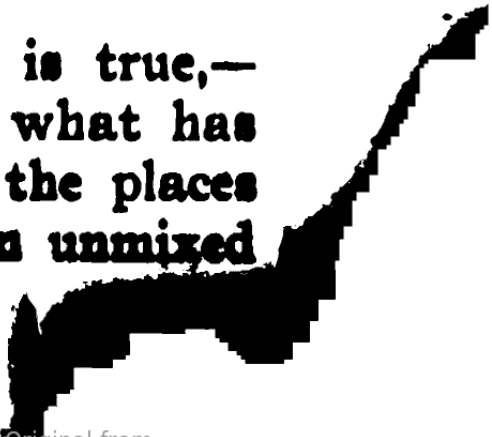
boarding-house in Rangoon.

Henceforth, life in the East had no attractions for us. Together, we had found each hour of the day of interest and significance; apart, it was but a period of lonely work for the Skipper, and of weary waiting for me, each of us counting Indian money into English time and reckoning every rupee put by as an hour of happy, home-life in England, to come in the far-off, blessed days, when the dream of retirement had become an actual fact.

Burma is a land of disillusions, a country to which many are lured by hopes of high salaries, rapid promotions, and quickly-made fortunes, only to find that the cost of living is iniquitously high, that the purchasing power of money is about one-third of what it is in England, and that the climate is so trying that a periodical holiday at home (with its consequent disbursement of savings) is absolutely necessary to the preservation of health.

Promotion is rapid enough, it is true,—though it is as well to consider what has become of the men who leave the places vacant, before regarding that as an unmixed



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blessing. The most complete disillusion of all, however, awaits the deep-sea man, who, in giving up 'blue water,' expects also to forego the hardship of a divided family. He soon discovers, to his cost, that he is much worse off than before, because, since the climate of Burma is fatal to English children, he finds himself obliged to maintain two homes at different ends of the earth. One home, where his children are left without a parent's care, he is able to visit once in every five years, the other home he sees for, perhaps, two days in every month.

Hitherto, we, on the river, had escaped this worst evil of the East. Now it threatened us daily. The nearer the pipe-line reached completion, the nearer the separation approached.

Occasionally, however, we received cheering news. We heard that the river had risen and washed some of the line away; that, in the cold mornings, the oil had congealed in the pipes and refused to flow; that the noonday heat had expanded the pipes and thrown them out of gear; and that enterprising jungle Burmans were tapping the line in places and helping

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themselves to oil, free of charge.

We clutched eagerly at any gossip of this sort and vainly tried to disbelieve reports to the contrary, but, beneath all the pretence, we realised that there was no hope, and each evening as we sat in quiet talk, while the cool breezes fanned us and the water lapped gently at the sides of the ship, we wondered sadly how many more such evenings lay before us.

One day we got news that the line was complete as far as Pyinbinhla, and orders came to load the oil there, instead of at Nyounghla. That confined the trip practically to the delta and shortened it by several days, but, though it meant easier work for the Skipper, we preferred the longer journey, and we missed the cool, dry air and the lovely hill scenery of Upper Burma.

Moreover, it afforded us very poor satisfaction to see the loaded oil-flat waiting for us, trip after trip, on our arrival at Pyinbinhla. It confirmed our fears as to the efficiency of the pipe-line and left us with only the vaguest, wildest hopes.

Yet time went on, and we still continue

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to run between Pyinbinhla and Rangoon. We heard no news of further progress, so we lulled ourselves into a false security.

After all, there might still be an earthquake, or a tidal wave, or a great volcanic upheaval that would disorganise the whole scheme of the work.

Even yet, something might happen that would destroy the line and give us back our happiness.

January came to an end. February slowly fulfilled its days, March began. The cold weather was now a thing of the past. Our year on the river was complete,—was beginning to grow into a second year. And then, one day, the blow fell. It seemed to come suddenly, though we had been dreading it so long.

News came that the pipe-line was finished, had been tested, and was in full working-order. We read accounts of it in the newspapers, we heard of it in the office, the other Commanders talked of nothing else.

Eleven of the thirteen steamers that had been plying busily, week by week, from Nyounghla to Rangoon were now no longer required to tow down the oil.

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The "Munepoor," so the order went forth, was to be laid up for a time, preparatory to going on the cargo-run.

There was a temporary lull, a slack time after weeks and months of strenuous work.

The Skipper decided to seize so favourable an opportunity and ask for home leave, and, to our relief and delight, it was granted.

Home leave! We had other things to talk of now:—the food we would eat, (that came first) the friends we should meet, the places we would visit, the plays we would see, the clothes we would buy, the air we should breathe, the thousand and one things we meant to do!

It was one long vista of delight, and we let no thoughts of an inadequate exchequer mar the picture, for, best of all, the doom of separation was averted—at least for a time.

We packed our trunks and left the "Munepoor" with far lighter hearts than we had ever anticipated, and, less than a week later, we found ourselves embarked on a homeward-bound steamer, gazing back,

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as she ploughed her way seawards o that finest sight on earth,—

" The Rangoon lights astern,"

So passed a year on the river. So ende a year.

And for what comes after,—it is 'on knees of the gods.'

THE END.

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